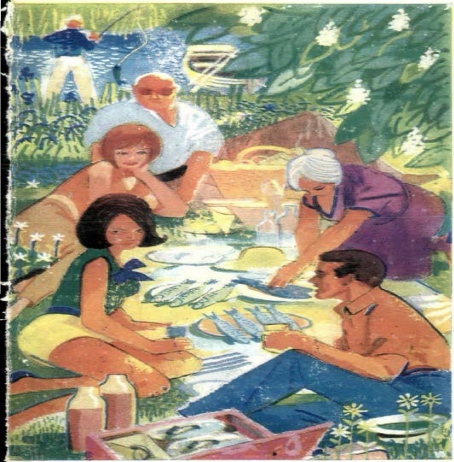
argosy

August



12 VIVID STORIES

P.G. WODE-HOUSE

H.E. BATES

ARTHUR C. CLARKE

JOHN CHEEVER etc.

YOUR HOLIDAY READING

Australia and New Zealand 3s. 6d.

argosy

Vol. XXVI No. 8 **AUGUST 1965**

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notes from NEW YORK

◆ Mention the name of P. G. Wodehouse and immediately the mind conjures up pictures of bumbling good eggs, Oxford bags, la-di-da accents, aristocratic damsels in the craziest situations and, of course, Jeeves, the all-too-perfect butler. Characters like these, served up in eighty-odd novels, made a fortune for Wodehouse.

Because of the unpopularity of some of his wartime broadcasts, Wodehouse went to the United States and eventually became a naturalised American. In spite of this he remains essentially British, living on twelve acres of English-smooth lawns and wooded glades just outside of New York.

But with Jeeves and Bertie Wooster now emerging on our television screens, it looks as though Pelham Grenville Wodehouse will, at eighty-four, capture a new and perhaps even wider audience here in Britain.

In view of this, Argosy presents a new Wodehouse story—*Bingo Bans the Bomb*—where you'll meet typical Wodehouse characters, but this time they spring from a contemporary setting.

◆ When it comes to writing space fiction, Arthur C. Clarke has no rival.

Scientist, lecturer, writer and photographer, forty-eight-year-old Clarke has the knack of firing the imagination to unlimited heights. The reason? His stories are never so incredible that they cannot in some way be a reality.

An Englishman by birth, he has spent most of his life in adventure in other parts of the world, learning and studying and discovering as he went along.

At present he is in New York writing the script for Stanley Kubrick's latest film, *Journey Beyond the Stars*, which is to be made in Britain later this year. When the script is

completed, Clarke plans to return to Ceylon to continue searching for and photographing underwater treasure.

His short stories of incidents that occupy that fraction of a man's life when it is poised near death in some adventure in space, have a plausibility that is frightening—yet still enlightening. Read his latest, *Maelstrom II*, in this issue and you'll see just what we mean.

◆ Two American writers who have several things in common are featured in this month's Argosy: John Cheever and Peter De Vries. Both are writers of the famed *New Yorker* inner circle. Both deal with the hectic life of the American commuting set. And both write brilliantly about human frailties. But here the resemblance ends.

John Cheever has captured almost every American literary prize from a Guggenheim Fellowship to the National Institute of Arts and Letters Award.

The characters of his short stories and books are usually of the American middle class on the brink of affluence. But his genius lies in the fact that he gives them a dignity which defies the cartoonists' idea of this type of status-seeker.

A Cheever story always has a degree of good and evil in conflict, and almost always points out that common life is a blessed thing.

He lives within commuting distance of New York with his wife and three children, and when he is not immersed in writing, he seems to spend his time worrying about his unpruned apple trees or trying to save a rotting elm so that orioles may still have a place to nest.

Peter De Vries, poet as well as author, was born in Chicago. He didn't hit New York until the late Harold Ross, founder and editor of the *New Yorker*, happened to read some of his poems and immediately hired him.

Up till then, De Vries had jobs that were varied, to say the least. He once had a toffee-apple round that took him in and out of Chicago suburbs. He was a radio actor, a Women's Club lecturer, furniture remover, book reviewer, and proudly tells how at one time he wrote a monthly rhymed table of contents for an advertising digest.

Married and a father, he uses any spare time away from writing to get involved in local politics, on which he thrives. He feels that now he has settled down he has become a trifle stodgy—but his way-out humour in the story beginning on page 55 effectively discounts any idea of this.

BINGO BANS THE BOMB

a new story

by P. G. WODEHOUSE

WHEN Bingo Little's wife, the popular novelist, Rosie M. Banks, exerted her pull and secured for Bingo the editorship of *Wee Tots*—the journal for the nursery and the home—she had said it would be best not to haggle about salary but to take what H. C. Purkiss, its proprietor, offered, and Bingo had done so, glad to have even the smallest bit of loose change to rattle in his pocket. But came a day when he felt he could do with rather more, so he went to Mr. Purkiss and asked for a raise, and Mr. Purkiss stared at him incredulously.

"A *what*?" he cried, wincing as if some unfriendly hand had gripped him.

"Just to show your confidence in me and encourage me to rise to new heights of achievement," said Bingo. "It would be money well spent," he pointed out, tenderly picking a piece of fluff off Mr. Purkiss' coat sleeve, for everything helps on these occasions.

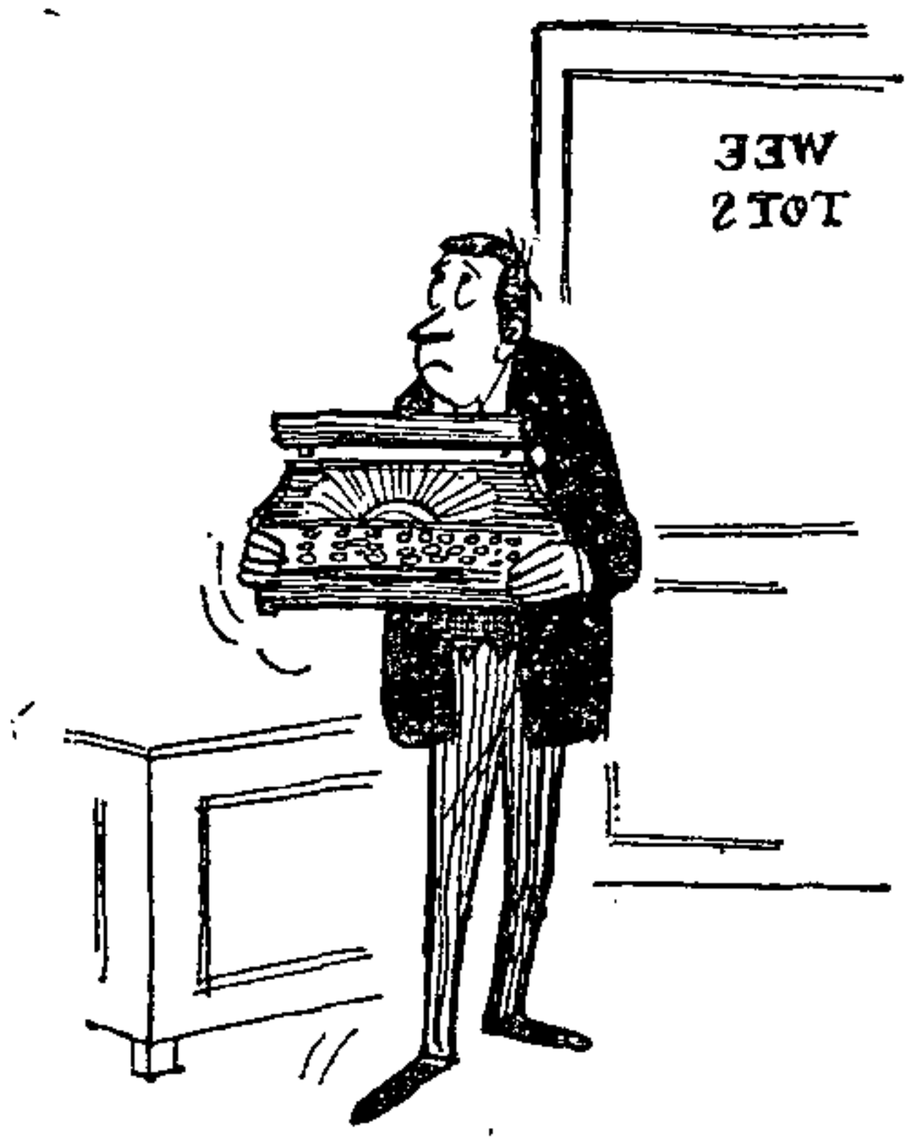
Mr. Purkiss shook his head. There were many reasons why he found himself unable to accede to the request—the hardness of the times, the growing cost of pulp paper, the severity of the income tax, to name but three. These and six or seven others he placed before his right-hand man, and an hour or so later, his daily task completed, the right-hand man went on his way, feeling like a left-hand man.

© P. G. Wodehouse 1965

The July evening was one of those fine evenings that come to London perhaps twice in the course of an English summer, but its beauty struck no answering chord in Bingo's soul. The sun was smiling, but he could not raise so much as a simper. The skies were blue, but he was bluer. He told himself that he had not really hoped, for Mr. Purkiss notoriously belonged to the slow-with-a-buck school of thought and no-one had ever found it easy to induce him to loosen up, but nevertheless the disappointment was bitter. And what set the seal on his depression was that Mrs. Bingo was not available to console him. He yearned to go and cry on her shoulder, but she was unfortunately not among those present. She had left for Brighton with Mrs. Purkiss that morning to join in the Founders' Day celebrations at the seminary where they had both been educated, and would not be back until tomorrow.

It seemed to him that all he could do was go to the Drones Club for a bite of dinner, possibly take in a movie after the meal and then return to his lonely home and so to bed, and he was passing with bowed head through Trafalgar Square en route for Dover Street, where the club was situated, when he heard a soprano voice exclaim, "Lord, love a duck!" and, looking up, saw that what had interrupted his reverie was a red-haired girl of singular beauty who had that indefinable air of being ready to raise hell at the drop of a hat which red-haired girls so often have.

"Oh, hello," he said, speaking with the touch of awkwardness customary in young husbands accosted by red-haired girls when their wives are away. He had had no difficulty in recognising her. Her name was Mabel Murgatroyd, and they had met some months previously in a water barrel in somebody's garden on the occasion when the police had raided the gambling club they were attending and it had been necessary to seek whatever shelter the neighbourhood could provide.



It was plain that the incident was green in Miss Murgatroyd's memory also, for she said, "If it isn't my old room mate Bingo Little! Fancy meeting

you again . . . Been in any interesting water barrels lately?"

"No, not lately."

"Nor me. I don't know how it is with you, but I've sort of lost my taste for them. When you've seen one, I often say, you've seen them all. I'm going in more for politics these days. A bunch of boys and girls, including me, have decided to ban the bomb."

"What bomb would that be?"

"The one that's going to knock us all cross-eyed unless steps are taken through the proper channels. We're protesting against it. Every now and then we march from Aldermaston, protesting like a ton of bricks. We also sit."

"Sit?"

"That's right."

"Sit where?"

"Wherever we happen to be. Here, to take an instance at random."

"What, in the middle of Trafalgar Square? Don't the police object?"

"You bet they do. They scoop us in, and the papers feature it next morning and that helps the cause. Ah, here comes a rozzer now, just when we need him. Down with you," said Mabel Murgatroyd, and seizing Bingo by the wrist she drew him with her to the ground, causing sixteen taxicabs, three omnibuses and eleven private cars to halt in their tracks, their drivers what-the-hell-ing in no uncertain terms.

It was a moment fraught with discomfort for Bingo. Apart from the fact that all this was doing his trousers no good, he had the feeling that he was making himself conspicuous, a thing he greatly disliked. But these minor qualms were overshadowed by the graver dysphoria occasioned by the arrival of the government employee to whom his companion had alluded. He was about eight feet seven in height, and his mood was plainly not sunny. For weeks he had been straining his back lifting debutantes and their escorts off London's roadways, and like so many of his colleagues he was sick of it. Without even saying, "Ho," or "What's all this?" he attached himself to the persons of Bingo and Miss Murgatroyd and led them from the scene. And in next to no time Bingo found himself in one of Bosher Street's cosy prison cells, due to face the awful majesty of the law on the following morning.

It was not, of course, an entirely novel experience for him. In his bachelor days he had generally found himself in custody on boat-race night. But he was now a respectable married

man and had said goodbye to all that, and it is not too much to say that he burnt with shame and remorse. Nor did the morrow bring anything in the nature of a happy ending.

"Five pounds," said the Bosher Street magistrate, a man of few words. "Next case," and Bingo, though he felt that a wiser beak would have been content with a reprimand, paid the money to the clerk of the court and was allowed to depart.

Mr. Purkiss was not at the office of *Wee Tots* when he arrived, and he was consequently at leisure to review his position. Considering the vicissitudes through which he had passed, his morale was reasonably high. He had slept only fitfully on the plank bed provided for their customers by the authorities and he had had practically no breakfast, but he felt that the experience had made him a deeper, graver man, which is always a good thing. And what comforted him particularly was the thought that there was no chance of Mrs. Bingo finding out how he had been employing himself in her absence, for with great presence of mind he had given his name as Charles de Gaulle with an address in East Dulwich.

He and Mrs. Bingo had always conducted their married life on strictly turtledove lines, but he was a shrewd enough student of the sex to know that you can push a turtledove just so far. Amiable though his Rosie's disposition was, he knew that if

informed that he had been sitting in Trafalgar Square cheek by jowl, as it were, with red-haired girls of singular beauty she would explode with as loud a report as the bomb which he had been engaged in banning.

It was, accordingly, with the feeling that if this was not the best of all possible worlds, it would do till another came along that he addressed himself to the morning's correspondence, and he was reading a letter from Tommy Bootle (twelve) about his cat Tibbles, when the telephone rang and Mrs. Bingo's voice floated over the wire.

"Bingo?"

"Oh, hello, light of my life. You back?"

"I am."

"How did everything go?"

"Quite satisfactorily."

"Did Mrs. Purkiss make a speech?"

"She did."

"Must have been nice for you meeting all the old college chums."

"Very."

"No doubt you swapped reminiscences of midnight feeds in the dormitory and what the games mistress said when she found Maud and Angela smoking reefers behind the gymnasium."

"Quite. Bingo, have you seen the *Mirror* this morning?"

"I have it on my desk, but I haven't looked at it yet."

"Turn to page eight," said Mrs. Bingo, and there was a click as she rang off.

Bingo did as directed, somewhat puzzled. Usually his mate's voice was soft and melodious, easily mistaken for silver bells ringing across a sunlit meadow in the springtime, but in the recent exchange of ideas he had seemed to sense in it a certain metallic note, and it perplexed him.

But not for long. Scarcely had his eye rested on page eight when all was made clear to him and the offices of *Wee Tots* did one of those *entrechats* which Nijinsky used to do in the Russian ballet. It was as if the bomb Miss Murgatroyd disliked so much had been touched off beneath his swivel chair.

Page eight was mostly pictures. There was one of the Prime Minister opening a bazaar, another of a resident of Chipping Norton who had just celebrated his hundredth birthday, a third of students rioting in Pernambuco or Mozambique or somewhere. But the one that interested him was the one at the foot of the page. It depicted a large policeman with a girl

of singular beauty in one hand and in the other a young man whose features, though somewhat distorted, he was immediately able to recognise. Newspaper photographs tend occasionally to be blurred, but this one was a credit to the artist behind the camera.

It was captioned:

MISS "GINGER" MURGATROYD AND FRIENDS

and as he gazed at it there swept over him an intense desire for a couple of quick ones. Experience had taught him that there was nothing that so stimulated the thought processes as a drop of the right stuff, and seldom had his thought processes been in such need of stimulation as now.

To grab his hat and hasten to the Drones Club was with him the work of an instant. There was no place in London where the stuff was righter than at the Drones, and there, it occurred to him, he might find someone who had something to suggest. And as luck would have it, the first person he ran into in the bar was Freddie Widgeon—not only one of the finest minds in the club, but a man who all his adult life had been thinking up ingenious ways of getting himself out of trouble with the other sex.

He related his story, and Freddie, listening sympathetically, said he had frequently been in the same sort of jam himself. There was, he said, only one thing to do, and Bingo said that one would be ample.

"I am assuming," said Freddie, "that you haven't the nerve to come the heavy he-man over the little woman? Look her in the eye, I mean, and make her wilt. Shove your chin out and say, 'Oh, yeah'?' and, 'So what?'"

Bingo assured him that his assumption was correct.

"I thought not. Then you must have an accident."

"An accident?"

"You know the old gag about women becoming ministering angels when pain and anguish wring the brow. I can testify that it works. Her heart will melt if she sees you all bunged up with splints and bandages. The best thing would be to get knocked over by a taxicab."

"What's the next best thing?"

"I have sometimes obtained excellent results by falling down a coal hole and spraining an ankle, but it's not easy to find a good coal hole these days, so in your case I would advise returning to the office and dropping a typewriter on your foot."

"But I should break a toe."

"Exactly. You couldn't do better. Break two or even

three. No sense in spoiling the ship for a ha'p'orth of tar."

Bingo shuddered visibly.

"I couldn't do it, Freddie old man," he said, and Freddie clicked his tongue censoriously.

"You're a difficult man to help, Bingo. Then the only thing I can suggest is that you have a double."

"I've already had one."

"I don't mean that sort of double. Tell Mrs. Bingo that there must be someone going about the place so like you that the keenest eye is deceived."

"By Jove, Freddie," said Bingo gratefully, "I believe you've hit it."

But, back at the office, he found his enthusiasm waning. Doubts began to creep in, and what he had supposed to be the scheme of a lifetime lost some of its pristine attractiveness. Mrs. Bingo wrote stories about girls who wanted to be loved for themselves alone and strong silent men who went out into the sunset with stiff upper lips, but she was not without a certain rude intelligence and it was more than possible, he felt, that she might fail to swallow an explanation which he could now see was difficult of ingestion.

In its broad general principles the idea was good, but his story, it was plain, would need propping up. Somebody must stiffen it with a bit of verisimilitude, and who better for this purpose than Miss Murgatroyd? Her word would be believed. If he could induce her to go to Mrs. Bingo and tell her that she had never set eyes on Richard ("Bingo") Little in her life and that her Trafalgar Square crony had been a cousin of hers of the name—say—of Ernest Maltravers, the home might yet be saved from the melting pot. She was, he knew, the daughter of Lord somebody . . . Lennerhassett, that was the name. He looked him up in the telephone book and was presently in communication with him.

"Oh, good morning, Lord Lennerhassett," he began.

"Who says it's good?" said the peer, who seemed to be ruffled about something.

"My name is Little."

"And mine is mud after what that ass of a daughter of mine did yesterday. I shan't be able to show my face at the club. The boys at The Athenæum will kid the pants off me. Sitting in the middle of Trafalgar Square and getting hauled in by the police! I don't know what girls are coming to these days. 'See what you've done, you blighted female,' I said to her when she rolled in from the police court. 'Blotted the

escutcheon, that's what you've done.' I let her have it straight from the shoulder."

"Girls will be girls," said Bingo, hoping to soothe.

"Not while I have my health and strength they won't," said Lord Lennerhassett.

Bingo saw that nothing was to be gained by pursuing this line of thought. Mabel Murgatroyd's parent was plainly in no mood for abstract discussion of the modern girl. Even at this distance he could hear him gnashing his teeth. Unless it was an electric drill working in the street. He changed the subject.

"I wonder if I could speak to Miss Murgatroyd?"

"Stop wondering. You can't."

"Why not?"

"Because I've shipped her off to her aunt in Edinburgh with strict instructions to stay there till she gets some sense into her fat little head. Are you a reporter?"

"No, just a friend."

Bingo had never heard the howl of a timber wolf that had stubbed its toe on a rock while hurrying through a Canadian forest, but he thought it must closely resemble the sound that nearly cracked his eardrum.

"You are, are you? No doubt one of the friends who have led her astray and started her off on all this escutcheon-blotting. I'd like to skin the lot of you with a blunt knife. Bounders with beards! You have a beard, of course?"

"No, no beard."

"Don't try to fool me. All you ghastly outsiders are festooned with the fungus. You flaunt it. Why the devil don't you shave?"

"I shave every morning."

"Is that so? Then will you do me a personal favour?"

"Certainly, certainly."

"Did you shave today?"

"As a matter of fact, no. I hadn't time. I had rather a busy morning."

"Then go back to whatever germ-ridden den you inhabit and do it now. And don't use a safety razor, use one of the old-fashioned kind, because then there's a sporting chance that you may sever your blasted carotid artery, which would be what some writer fellow whose name I can't recall described as a consummation devoutly to be wished. Goodbye."

It was in thoughtful mood that Bingo replaced the receiver. He fancied that he had noticed a certain unfriendliness in

Lord Lennerhassett's manner—guarded, perhaps, but nevertheless unmistakable unfriendliness—and he was conscious of that feeling of frustration that comes to those who fail to make friends and influence people: but that was not the main cause of his despondency. What was really worrying him was the realisation that with Mabel Murgatroyd in Edinburgh he had lost his only chance of putting across that double thing and making it stick. It was, he now saw more clearly than ever, not at all the sort of story a young husband could expect to make convincing without the help of a strong supporting cast.

It really began to seem as if Freddie's typewriter-on-toe sequence was his only resource, and he stood for some time eyeing the substantial machine on which he was wont to write the *Uncle Joe to His Chickabiddies* page. He even lifted it and held it for a moment poised. But he could not bring himself to let it fall. He hesitated and delayed. If Shakespeare had happened to come by with Ben Jonson, he would have nudged the latter in the ribs and whispered, "See that chap, rare Ben? He illustrates exactly what I was driving at when I wrote that stuff about 'letting *I dare not* wait upon *I would*, like the poor cat i' the adage.'"

Finally he gave up the unequal struggle. Replacing the machine, he flung himself into his chair and with his head in his hands uttered a hollow groan. As he did so, he got the impression that there was a curious echo in the room, but looking up he saw that he had been in error in attributing this to the acoustics. There had been two groans in all, and the second one had proceeded from the lips of H. C. Purkiss. The proprietor of *Wee Tots* was standing in the doorway of his private office, propping himself against the woodwork with an outstretched hand, and it was obvious at a glance that he was not the suave, dapper H. C. Purkiss of yesterday. There were dark circles under his eyes, and those eyes could have stepped straight on to any breakfast plate and passed without comment as poached eggs. His nervous system, too, was plainly far from being in midseason form, for when in the street outside a car backfired, he quivered in every limb and made what looked to Bingo like a spirited attempt to break the European record for the standing high jump.

"Ah, Mr. Little," he said huskily. "Busy at work, I see. Good, good. Anything of interest in the morning post bag?"

"Mostly the usual gibbering. Amazing how many of our young subscribers seem to have softening of the brain. There

is a letter from Wilfred Waterson (seven) about his pet tortoise that would act as a passport into any but the most choosy lunatic asylum."

"Quite, quite. But we must not expect old heads on young shoulders. And speaking of heads, I wonder if you could oblige me with a couple of aspirins? Or a glass of tomato juice with a drop of Worcester sauce in it would do. You have none? Too bad. It might have brought a certain relief."

Illumination flashed upon Bingo.

"Good lord!" he cried. "Were you on a toot last night?"

Mr. Purkiss waved a deprecating hand, nearly overbalancing in the process.

"Toot is a harsh word, Mr. Little. I confess that in Mrs. Purkiss' absence I attempted to alleviate my loneliness by joining a group of friends of my bachelor days who wished to play poker. It was a lengthy session, concluding only an hour ago, and it is possible that in the course of the evening I may have exceeded—slightly—my customary intake of alcoholic refreshment. It seemed to be expected of me, and I did not like to spoil the party. But when you use the word 'toot'..."

"It sounds like a toot to me. Yes, I would say that it had all the earmarks of a... Gosh!" said Bingo, breaking off.

An idea of amazing brilliance had struck him. Twenty-four hours ago he would never have had the moral courage to suggest such a thing, but now that H. C. Purkiss had shown himself to be one of the boys—poker parties in the home and all that—he was convinced that if he, Bingo, begged him, Purkiss, to say that he, Bingo, had been with him, Purkiss, last night, he, Purkiss, would not have the inhumanity to refuse. And Mrs. Bingo would not dream of disbelieving a statement from such a source.

He had just opened his lips to speak, when Mr. Purkiss resumed his remarks.

"Perhaps you are right, Mr. Little. Quite possibly toot may be the *mot juste*. One thing is certain—it has placed me in a position of the gravest peril. I am informed by my maidservant that Mrs. Purkiss made no fewer than three attempts to reach me on the telephone last night—at ten-thirty p.m., shortly after midnight and again at four o'clock in the morning, and I greatly fear that my failure to answer her calls will have occasioned her some concern. So—"

Bingo's heart sank like an oyster going down for the third time in an oyster stew. He would have reeled beneath the shock, had he not been seated. Impossible now to assure

Mrs. Bingo that he had been with Mr. Purkiss during the hours he had spent in his Bosher Street cell. So poignant was his anguish that he uttered a piercing cry, and Mr. Purkiss leapt silently into the air, dislodging some plaster from the ceiling with the top of his head.

"So," Mr. Purkiss went on, having returned to *terra firma,* "I should be infinitely grateful to you, Mr. Little, if you would vouch for the fact that I was with you till an advanced hour at your home. It would, indeed, do no harm if you were to tell Mrs. Purkiss that we sat up so long discussing office matters that you allowed me to spend the night in your spare room."

Bingo drew a deep breath. It has been sufficiently established that the proprietor of *Wee Tots* was not easy on the eye as of even date, but to him he seemed a lovely spectacle. He could not have gazed on him with more appreciation if he had been the Taj Mahal by moonlight.

His manner, however, was austere. A voice had seemed to whisper in his ear that here, if he played his cards right, he could do himself a bit of good. There was, so he had learned from a reliable source, a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, led on to fortune.

"Am I to understand, Purkiss," he said, "that you are asking me to tell a deliberate falsehood?"

"You would be doing me a great kindness."

"I'm not so sure that I feel like doing you kindnesses. Yesterday I asked you for a raise of salary and you curtly refused."

"Not curtly."

"Well, fairly curtly."

"Yes, I remember. But I have been giving the matter thought, and I am now prepared to increase your stipend by—shall we say ten pounds a month?"

"No, we jolly well shan't say anything of the ruddy sort. Make it fifty."

"Fifty!"

"Well, call it forty-five."

"You would not consider thirty?"

"Certainly not."

"Very well."

"You agree?"

"I do."

The telephone rang.

"That is probably my wife again," said Bingo. "Hello?"

"Bingo?"

"Oh, hello, moon of my delight. What became of you when we were talking before? Why did you buzz off like a jack rabbit?"

"I had to go and look after Mrs. Purkiss."

"Something wrong with her?"

"She kept fainting. She was distracted because Mr. Purkiss was not at home all night."

Bingo laughed a jolly laugh.

"Of course he wasn't. He was with me. We had office matters to discuss, and I took him home with me. We sat up so long that I put him in the spare room. He spent the night **there."**

There was a long silence at the other end of the wire. Then Mrs. Bingo spoke.

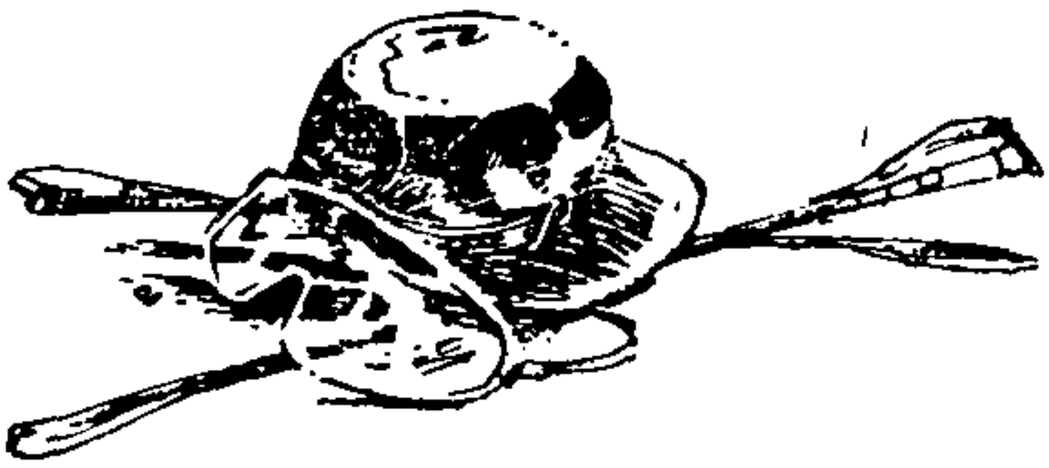
"But what about that photograph?"

"Which photograph? Oh, you mean the one in the paper. I think I know what is in your mind. It looked rather like me, didn't it? I was quite surprised. I'd often heard of this thing of fellows having doubles, but I'd never come across an instance of it before. Except in books, of course. I remember one by E. Phillips Oppenheim where there was an English bloke who looked just like a German bloke, and the English bloke posed as the German bloke or *vice versa*, I've forgotten which. I believe it caused some confusion. But, getting back to that photograph, obviously if I spent the night with Purkiss I couldn't have spent it in a dungeon cell, as my double presumably did. But perhaps you would care to have a word with Purkiss, who is here at my side. For you, Purkiss," said Bingo, handing him the receiver.

THEY'RE OFF!

1. The winners of the 1938 Grand National and the 1944 Derby both had nautical names. What were they?
2. In what year did the horse "Tulyar" succeed in winning both the Derby and the Doncaster St. Leger in the same season?
3. What eight-year-old horse won the 1958 Grand National at Aintree?
4. Which racecourse would you go to if you wanted to see the 1¼ mile event The Eclipse Stakes?
5. Lester Piggott has ridden three horses to Derby victories: "Never Say Die" in 1954, "——" in 1957 and "St. Paddy" in 1960. Name the missing horse.
6. Of the following races, which is the shortest and which is the longest distance?
   (a) 1¾ miles. (b) 1 mile, 880 yards. (c) 1 mile, 5 furlongs.
7. If Ascot is in Berkshire and Epsom in Surrey, where are (a) Newmarket. (b) Uttoxeter.
8. The horse "Commander-in-Chief" won a big race during the 1963 Flat Racing season. Which one of these four was it?
   (a) Lincolnshire Handicap. (b) Cesarewitch Stakes.
   (c) Cambridgeshire Stakes. (d) Manchester November Handicap.
9. Both the Derby and the Oaks are run at Epsom. Where are the 2,000 Guineas and the 1,000 Guineas run?
10. Which Australian-born jockey was killed during a race meeting outside Paris only five months after winning the 1962 Derby on "Larkspur"?

Ten out of ten? Turn to page 39 to find out.



THE MUSIC TEACHER

Hadn't he always obeyed the traffic lights, bathed daily, prayed weekly?

IT all seemed to have been arranged—Seton sensed this when he opened the door of his house that evening and walked down the hall into the living room. It all seemed to have been set with as much care as, in an earlier period of his life, he had known girls to devote to the flowers, the candles and the records for the phonograph. This scene was not arranged for his pleasure, nor was it arranged for anything so simple as reproach. "Hello," he said loudly and cheerfully.

Sobbing and moaning rent the air. In the middle of the small living room stood an ironing board. One of his shirts was draped over it, and his wife, Jessica, wiped away a tear as she ironed. Near the piano stood Jocelin, the baby. Jocelin was howling. Sitting in a chair near her little sister was Millicent, his oldest daughter, sobbing and holding in her hands the pieces of a broken doll. Phyllis, the middle child, was on her hands and knees, prising the stuffing out of an armchair with a beer-can opener. Clouds of smoke from what smelled like a burning leg of lamb drifted out of the open kitchen door into the living room.

He could not believe that they had passed the day in such disorder. It must all have been planned, arranged—including the conflagration in the oven—for the moment of his home-coming. He even thought he saw a look of inner tranquillity on his wife's harassed face as she glanced around the room and admired the effectiveness of the scene.

He felt routed but not despairing, and standing on the

by John Cheever

threshold, he made a quick estimate of his remaining forces and settled on a kiss as his first move; but as he approached the ironing board his wife waved him away, saying, "Don't come near me. You'll catch my cold. I have a *terrible* cold." He then got Phyllis away from the armchair, promised to mend Millicent's doll, and carried the baby into the bathroom and changed her diapers. From the kitchen came loud oaths as Jessica fought her way through the clouds of smoke and took the meat out of the stove.

It was burnt. So was almost everything else—the rolls, the potatoes and the frozen apple tart. There were cinders in Seton's mouth and a great heaviness in his heart as he looked past the plates of spoilt food to Jessica's face, once gifted with wit and passion but now dark and lost to him. After supper he helped with the dishes and read to the children, and the purity of their interest in what he read and did, the power of trust in their love, seemed to make the taste of burnt meat sad as well as bitter. The smell of smoke stayed in the air long after everyone but Seton had gone up to bed.

He sat alone in the living room, recounting his problems to himself. He had been married ten years, and Jessica still seemed to him to possess an unusual loveliness of person and nature, but in the last year or two something grave and mysterious had come between them. The burnt roast was not unusual—it was routine. She burnt the chops, she burnt the hamburgers, she even burnt the turkey at Thanksgiving; and she seemed to burn the food deliberately, as if it was a means of expressing her resentment towards him. It was not rebellion against drudgery. Cleaning women and mechanical appliances—the lightening of her burden—made no difference. It was not, he thought, even resentment. It was like some subterranean sea change, some sexual campaign or revolution stirring—unknown perhaps to her—beneath the shining and common appearance of things.

He did not want to leave Jessica, but how much longer could he cope with the tearful children, the dark looks, and the smoky and chaotic house? It was not discord that he resisted but a threat to the most healthy and precious part of his self-esteem. To be long-suffering in the circumstances seemed to him indecent. What could he do? Change, motion, openings seemed to be what he and Jessica needed, and it was perhaps an indication of his limitations that, in trying to devise some way of extending his marriage, the only thing he could think of was to take Jessica to dinner

in a restaurant where they had often gone ten years ago, when they were lovers. But even this, he knew, would not be simple. A point-blank invitation would only get him a point-blank, bitter refusal. He would have to be wary. He would have to surprise and disarm her.

This was in the early autumn. The days were clear. The yellow leaves were falling everywhere. From all the windows of the house and through the glass panes in the front door, one saw them coming down. Seton waited for two or three days. He waited for an unusually fine day, and then he called Jessica from his office, in the middle of the morning. There was a cleaning woman at the house, he knew. Millicent and Phyllis would be in school, and Jocelin would be asleep. Jessica would not have too much to do. She might even be idle and reflective. He called her and told her—he did not invite her—to come to town and to have dinner with him. She hesitated; she said it would be difficult to find someone to stay with the children; and finally she succumbed. He even seemed to hear in her voice, when she agreed to come, a trace of the gentle tenderness he adored.

It was a year since they had done anything like dining together in a restaurant, and when he left his office that night and turned away from the direction of the station he was conscious of the mountainous and deadening accrual of habit that burdened their relationship. Too many circles had been drawn around his life, he thought; but how easy it was to overstep them. The restaurant where he went to wait for her was modest and good—polished, starched, smelling of fresh bread and sauces, and in a charming state of readiness when he reached it that evening. The hat-check girl remembered him, and he remembered the exuberance with which he had come down the flight of steps into the bar when he was younger. How wonderful everything smelled. The bartender had just come on duty, freshly shaved and in a white coat. Everything seemed cordial and ceremonious. Every surface was shining, and the light that fell on to his shoulders was the light that had fallen there ten years ago.

When the headwaiter stopped to say good evening, Seton asked to have a bottle of wine—*their* wine—iced. The door into the night was the door he used to watch in order to see Jessica come in with snow in her hair, to see her come in with a new dress and new shoes, to see her come in with good news, worries, apologies for being late. He could remember

the way she glanced at the bar to see if he was there, the way she stopped to speak with the hat-check girl, and then lightly crossed the floor to put her hand in his and to join lightly and gracefully in his pleasure for the rest of the night.

Then he heard a child crying. He turned towards the door in time to see Jessica enter. She carried the crying baby against her shoulder. Phyllis and Millicent followed in their worn snowsuits. It was still early in the evening, and the restaurant was not crowded. This entrance, this tableau, was not as spectacular as it would have been an hour later, but it was—for Seton, at least—powerful enough. As Jessica stood in the doorway with a sobbing child in her arms and one on each side of her, the sense was not that she had come to meet her husband and, through some breakdown in arrangements, had been forced to bring the children; the sense was that she had come to make a public accusation of the man who had wronged her. She did not point her finger at him, but the significance of the group was dramatic and accusatory.

Seton went to them at once. It was not the kind of restaurant one brought children to, but the hat-check girl was kindly and helped Millicent and Phyllis out of their snowsuits. Seton took Jocelin in his arms, and she stopped crying.

"The baby-sitter couldn't come," Jessica said, but she hardly met his eyes, and she turned away when he kissed her. They were taken to a table at the back of the place. Jocelin upset a bowl of olives, and the meal was as gloomy and chaotic as the burnt suppers at home. The children fell asleep on the drive back, and Seton could see that he had failed—failed or been outwitted again. He wondered, for the first time, if he was dealing not with the shadows and mysteries of Jessica's sex but with plain fractiousness.

He tried again, along the same lines; he asked the Thompsons for cocktails one Saturday afternoon. He could tell that they didn't want to come. They were going to the Carmignoles'—everyone was going to the Carmignoles'—and it was a year or more since the Setons had entertained; their house had suffered a kind of social infamy. The Thompsons came only out of friendship, and they came only for one drink. They were an attractive couple, and Jack Thompson seemed to enjoy a tender mastery over his wife that Seton envied.

He had told Jessica the Thompsons were coming. She had said nothing. She was not in the living room when they arrived, but she appeared a few minutes later, carrying a laundry basket full of wash, and when Seton asked her if she

wouldn't have a drink, she said that she didn't have time. The Thompsons could see that he was in trouble, but they could not stay to help him—they would be late at the Carmignoles'. But when Lucy Thompson had got into the car, Jack came back to the door and spoke to Seton so forcefully —so clearly out of friendship and sympathy—that Seton hung on his words.

He said that he could see what was going on, and that Seton should have a hobby—a specific hobby: he should take piano lessons. There was a lady named Miss Deming and he should see her. She would help. Then he waved goodbye and went down to his car. This advice did not seem in any way strange to Seton. He was desperate and tired, and where was the sense in his life? When he returned to the living room, Phyllis was attacking the chair again with the beer-can opener. Her excuse was that she had lost a quarter in the upholstery. Jocelin and Millicent were crying. Jessica had begun to burn the evening meal.

They had burnt veal on Sunday, burnt meat loaf on Monday, and on Tuesday the meat was so burnt that Seton couldn't guess what it was. He thought of Miss Deming, and decided she might be a jolly trollop who consoled the men of the neighbourhood under the guise of giving music lessons. But when he telephoned, her voice was the voice of a crone. He said that Jack Thompson had given him her name, and she said for him to come the next evening at seven o'clock.

As he left his house after supper on Wednesday, he thought that there was at least some therapy in getting out of the place and absorbing himself in something besides his domestic and business worries. Miss Deming lived on Bellevue Avenue, on the other side of town. The house numbers were difficult to see, and Seton parked his car at the kerb and walked, looking for the number of her house.

It was an evening in the fall. Bellevue Avenue was one of those back streets of frame houses that are irreproachable in their demeanour, their effect, but that are ornamented, through some caprice, with little minarets and curtains of wooden beading, like a mistaken or at least a mysterious nod to the faraway mosques and harems of Islam. This paradox gave the place its charm. The street was declining, but it was declining gracefully; its decay was luxuriant, and in the back yards roses bloomed in profusion, and cardinals sang in the fir trees. A few householders were still raking

their lawns. Seton had been raised on just such a street, and he was charmed to stumble on this fragment of his past. The sun was setting—there was a show of red light at the foot of the street—and at the sight of this he felt a pang in his stomach as keen as hunger, but it was not hunger, it was simple aspiration. Oh, to lead an illustrious life!

Miss Deming's house had no porch, and may have needed paint more than the others, although he could not tell for sure, now that the light had begun to fade. A sign on the door said, KNOCK AND COME IN. He stepped into a small hallway, with a staircase and a wooden hat-rack. In a farther room he saw a man as old as himself bent over the piano keys.

"You're early," Miss Deming called out. "Please sit down and wait."

She spoke with such deep resignation, such weariness, that the tone of her voice seemed to imply to Seton that what he waited for would be disgusting and painful. He sat down on a bench, under the hat-rack. He was uncomfortable. His hands sweated, and he felt painfully large for the house, the bench, the situation. How mysterious was this life, he thought, where his wife had hidden her charms and he was planning to study the piano. His discomfort got so intense that he thought for a moment of fleeing. He could step out of the door, into Bellevue Avenue, and never come back again. A memory of the confusion at home kept him where he was. Then the thought of waiting as a mode of eternity attacked him. How much time one spent waiting in dentists' and doctors' ante-rooms, waiting for trains, for planes, waiting in front of telephone booths and in restaurants. It seemed that he had wasted the best of his life in waiting, and that by contracting to wait for piano lessons he might throw away the few vivid years that were left to him. Again he thought of escaping, but at that moment the lesson in the other room came to an end.

"You've not been practising enough," he heard Miss Deming say crossly. "You have to practise an hour a day, without exception, or else you'll simply be wasting my time." Her pupil came through the little hall with his coat collar turned up so that Seton couldn't see his face. "Next," she said.

The little room with the upright piano in it was more cluttered than the hall. Miss Deming hardly looked up when he came in. She was a small woman. Her brown hair was streaked with grey, braided, and pinned to her head in a sparse coronet. She sat on an inflated cushion, with her hands

folded in her lap, and moved her lips now and then with distaste, as if something galled her.

Seton blundered on to the little piano stool. "I've never taken piano lessons," he said. "I once took cornet lessons. I rented a cornet when I was in high school—"

"We'll forget about that," she said.

She pointed out middle C and asked him to play a scale. His fingers, in the bright light from the music rack, looked enormous and naked. He struggled with his scale. Once or twice, she rapped his knuckles with a pencil; once or twice she manipulated his fingers with hers, and he had a vision of her life as a nightmare of clean hands, dirty hands, hairy hands, limp and muscular hands, and he decided that this might account for her feeling of distaste. Halfway through the lesson, Seton dropped his hands into his lap. His irresolution only made her impatient, and she placed his hands back on the keys. He wanted to smoke, but on the wall above the piano there was a large sign that forbade this. His shirt was wet when the lesson ended.

"Please bring the exact change when you come again. Put the money in the vase on the desk," she said. "Next." Seton and the next pupil passed each other in the doorway, but the stranger averted his face.

The end of the ordeal elated Seton, and as he stepped out into the darkness of Bellevue Avenue he had a pleasant and silly image of himself as a pianist. He wondered if these simple pleasures were what Jack Thompson had meant.

The children were in bed when he got home, and he sat down to practise. Miss Deming had given him a two-handed finger drill with a little melody, and he went over this again and again for an hour. He practised every day, including Sunday, and sincerely hoped when he went for his second lesson that she would compliment him by giving him something more difficult, but she spent the hour criticising his phrasing and fingering, and told him to practise the drill for another week. He thought that at least after his third lesson he would have a change, but he went home with the same drill.

Jessica neither encouraged him nor complained. She seemed mystified by this turn of events. The music got on her nerves, and he could see where it would. The simple drill, with its melody, impressed itself even on to the memories of his daughters. It seemed to become a part of all their lives, as unwelcome as an infection, and as pestilential. It drifted

through Seton's mind during all the business day, and at any sudden turn of feeling—pain or surprise—the melody would swell and come to the front of his consciousness. Seton had never known that this drudgery, this harrying of the mind was a part of mastering the piano. Now in the evening after supper when he sat down to practise, Jessica hastily left the room and went upstairs. She seemed intimidated by the music, or perhaps afraid. His own relationship to the drill was oppressive and unclear.

Taking a late train one evening and walking up from the station past the Thompsons', he heard the same pestilential drill coming through the walls of their house. Jack must be practising. There was nothing very strange about this, but when he passed the Carmignoles' and heard the drill again, he wondered if it was not his own memory that made it ring in his ears. The night was dark, and with his sense of reality thus shaken, he stood on his own doorstep thinking that the world changed more swiftly than one could perceive —died and renewed itself—and that he moved through the events of his life with no more comprehension than a naked swimmer.

Jessica had not burnt the meat that night. She had kept a decent supper for him in the oven, and she served it to him with a timidity that made him wonder if she was not about to return to him as his wife. After supper, he read to the children and then rolled back his shirtsleeves and sat down at the piano.

As Jessica was preparing to leave the room, she turned and spoke to him. Her manner was pleading, and this made her eyes seem larger and darker, and deepened her natural pallor. "I don't like to interfere," she said softly, "and I know I don't know anything about music, but I wonder if you couldn't ask her—your teacher—if she couldn't give you something else to practise. That exercise is on my mind so. I hear it all day. If she could give you a new piece—"

"I know what you mean," he said. "I'll ask her."

By his fifth lesson, the days had grown much shorter and there was no longer any fiery sunset at the foot of Bellevue Avenue to remind him of his high hopes, his longings. He knocked, and stepped into the little house, and noticed at once the smell of cigarette smoke. He took off his hat and coat and went into the living room, but Miss Deming was not on her rubber cushion. He called her, and she answered from the

kitchen and opened the door on to a scene that astonished him.

Two young men sat at the kitchen table, smoking and drinking beer. Their dark hair gleamed with oil and was swept back in wings. They wore motorcycle boots and red hunting shirts, and their manners seemed developed, to a fine point, for the expression of lawless youth. "We'll be waiting for you, lover," one of them said loudly as she closed the door after her, and as she came towards Seton he saw a look of pleasure on her face—of lightness and self-esteem—fade, and the return of her habitually galled look.

"My boys," she said, and sighed.

"Are they neighbours?" Seton asked.

"Oh, no. They come from New York. They come up and spend the night sometimes. I help them when I can, poor things. They're like sons to me."

"It must be nice for them," Seton said.

"Please commence," she said. All the feeling had left her voice.

"My wife wanted to know if I couldn't have something different—a new piece."

"They always do," she said wearily.

"Something a little less repetitious," Seton said.

"None of the gentlemen who come here have ever complained about my methods. If you're not satisfied, you don't have to come. Of course, Mr. Purvis went too far. Mrs. Purvis is still in the sanatorium, but I don't think the fault is mine. You want to bring her to her knees, don't you? Isn't that what you're here for? Please commence."

Seton began to play, but with more than his usual clumsiness. The unholy old woman's remarks had stunned him. What had he got into? Was he guilty? Had his instinct to flee when he first entered the house been the one he should have followed? Had he, by condoning the stuffiness of the place, committed himself to some kind of obscenity, some kind of witchcraft? Had he agreed to hold over a lovely woman the subtle threat of madness? The old crone spoke softly now and, he thought, wickedly. "Play the melody lightly, lightly, lightly," she said. "That is how it will do its work."

He went on playing, borne along on an unthinking devotion to consecutiveness, for if he protested, as he knew he should, he would only authenticate the nightmare. His head and his fingers worked with perfect independence of his feelings, and while one part of him was full of shock, alarm

and self-reproach, his fingers went on producing the insidious melody. From the kitchen he could hear the deep laughter, the pouring of beer, the shuffle of motorcycle boots. Perhaps because she wanted to rejoin her friends—her boys—she cut the lesson short, and Seton's relief was euphoric.

He had to ask himself again and again if she had really said what he thought he heard her say, and it seemed so improbable that he wanted to stop and talk with Jack Thompson about it, until he realised that he could not mention what had happened; he would not be able to put it into words. This darkness where men and women struggled pitilessly for supremacy and withered crones practised witchcraft was not the world where he made his life. The old lady seemed to inhabit some barrier reef of consciousness, some grey moment after waking that would be demolished by the light of day.

Jessica was in the living room when he got home, and as he put his music on the rack he saw a look of dread in her face. "Did she give you a piece?" she asked. "Did she give you something besides that drill?"

"Not this time," he said. "I guess I'm not ready. Perhaps next time."

"Are you going to practise now?"

"I might."

"Oh, not tonight, darling! Please not tonight! Please, please, *please* not tonight, my love!" and she was on her knees.

The restoration of Seton's happiness—and it returned to them both with a rush—left him oddly self-righteous about how it had come about, and when he thought of Miss Deming he thought of her with contempt and disgust. Caught up in a whirl of palatable suppers and lovemaking, he didn't go near the piano. He washed his hands of her methods. He had chosen to forget the whole thing. But when Wednesday night came round again, he got up to go there at the usual time and say goodbye. He could have telephoned her. Jessica was uneasy about his going back, but he explained that it was merely to end the arrangement, and kissed her, and went out.

It was a dark night. The Turkish shapes of Bellevue Avenue were dimly lighted. Someone was burning leaves. He knocked on Miss Deming's door and stepped into the little hall. The house was dark. The only light came through the windows from the street. "Miss Deming," he called.

"Miss Deming?" He called her name three times. The chair beside the piano bench was empty, but he could feel the old lady's touch on everything in the place. She was not there—that is, she did not answer his voice—but she seemed to be standing in the door to the kitchen, standing on the stairs, standing in the dark at the end of the hall; and a light sound he heard from upstairs seemed to be her footfall.

He went home, and he hadn't been there half an hour when the police came and asked him to come with them. He went outside—he didn't want the children to hear—and he made the natural mistake of protesting, since after all was he not a most law-abiding man? Had he not always paid for his morning paper, obeyed the traffic lights, bathed daily, prayed weekly, kept his tax affairs in order, and paid his bills on the tenth of the month? There was not, in the broad landscape of his past, a trace, a hint of illegality. What did the police want with him? They wouldn't say, but they insisted that he come with them, and finally he got into the patrol car with them and drove to the other side of town, across some railroad tracks, to a dead-end place, a dump, where there were some other policemen.

It was a scene for violence—bare, ugly, hidden away from any house, and with no-one to hear her cries for help. She lay on the crossroads, like a witch. Her neck was broken, and her clothes were still disordered from her struggle with the great powers of death. They asked if he knew her, and he said yes. Had he ever seen any young men around her house, they asked, and he said no. His name and address had been found in a notebook on her desk, and he explained that she had been his piano teacher. They were satisfied with his explanation, and they let him go.

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PUTTING A FOOT IN IT

A girl I know reports that in a crowded Tube train recently a young man began fumbling surreptitiously at her ankle. She gave him a very frigid glare, silencing a stumbling explanation.

Within seconds, however, he was at it again. Apparently, he was holding her tightly around the instep.

Outraged, she snapped: "Will you please let go of me—I want to get out at the next station."

"I wanted to get off at the last stop," said the man. "But you've got your foot through the handle of my holdall."

Evening Standard, 22 January, 1965

AN ENGLISHMAN ABROAD . . .

FRANCE

". . . We have stopped to take refreshment in the beautiful wine country . . ."

HOLIDAY POSTCARDS FROM THELWELL

—VENICE—

"For heaven's sake, Mabel! We're a seafaring nation!"

GIRL IN THE BLACK BATHING SUIT

I SAW her for the first time when I was on holiday in the south of Spain. It was at a place called Ladaro, not one of the popular resorts, which was the reason I had chosen it. It was not crowded with visitors, which fitted in with my idea of a holiday abroad, and it was not so expensive, which suited my pocket.

She was seated on the sand, leaning back against one of those sunbathing boards to be seen on the beaches in that part of Spain—two long, broad planks hinged together and placed as an inverted V on the sand to afford both a wind-break and a back-rest for the sunbather.

She was wearing a black straw hat with her black bathing suit, which made her very noticeable in the colourful surroundings—the brightly-painted sunbathing boards, the striped umbrellas, the brilliant, flowering shrubs and wall-flowers along the rocky shoreline.

But even if there had not been the contrasting black of her bathing-suit-straw-hat ensemble, I should most certainly have noticed her. She struck me as one of the most beautiful girls I had ever seen.

She had seen me arrive on the beach because I was conscious of her watching me as I came down from the roadway. It was obvious from the few things around her on

the sand that she was alone. Without thinking about it twice I went up to her and asked whether she minded if I shared the board with her.

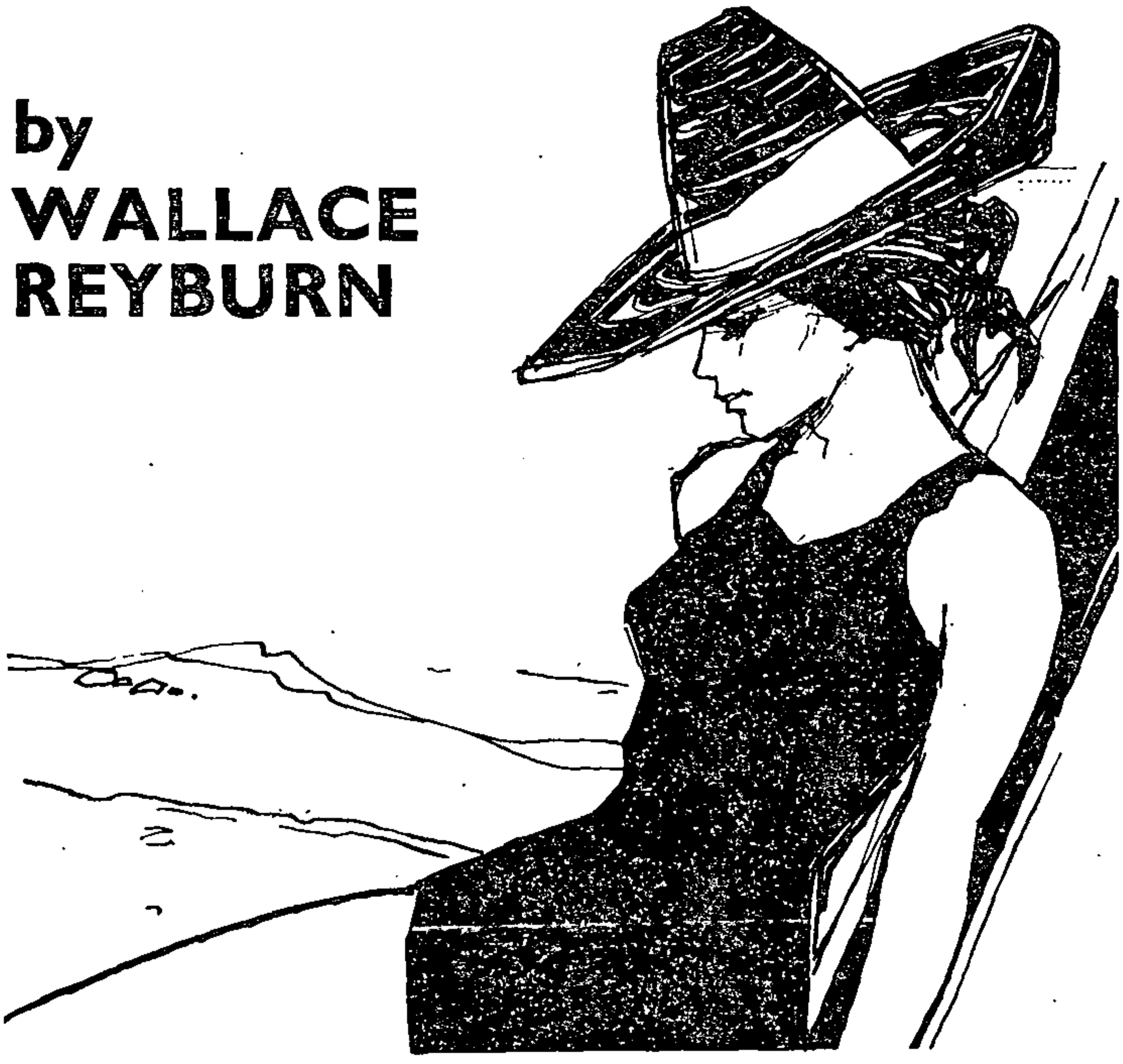
This was unusual for me because right from the days when I was a toddler I had been plagued by shyness. But I was so instantly taken with her that I had a compulsion to sit down beside her, to be with her and talk to her, an impulse so strong that not even the thought of a rebuff could make me resist.

She indicated that she was perfectly agreeable to my sitting down there.

It was most odd the way we at once launched into conversation, as though we had known one another for some time. She was of course Spanish but she spoke perfect English, which I had found was usual with the *ricos*, the well-to-do of Spain.

But our talking to each other so readily was not the only

by
WALLACE
REYBURN



odd aspect. There were two other things that were strange.

Although this was my first visit to Spain I had been told, and had soon found out for myself, that girls in southern Spain have nothing like the freedom of English girls. The system of chaperoning and the sheltered life has persisted much longer down there. So it was unexpected when there was no barrier to me, a perfect stranger, being with her.

And the other odd thing was that Rosario Padron was married. She had been married for a mere four months.

But in due course I was to learn from her why convention and her being married had not caused her to let me know politely but firmly that I wasn't wanted around there. As soon as she had seen me her reaction had been the same as mine, she had felt impelled to meet me.

As we talked, went for a swim, then returned to our place on the beach to talk some more, the urgency of that initial attraction we had felt towards each other showed no sign of diminishing. It became even more compelling. Looking into her eyes, my whole body seemed to cry out for me to take her in my arms and kiss her and hold her tight against me. I had never felt such a demanding urge about anyone before and it seemed that the same was the case with her. There was a sort of frustrated anguish in the way she looked back at me.

But I was somewhat puzzled in the back of my mind by this. For my part, it was reasonable enough. I was in my twenties, with no marriage ties, as free as the wind. But when a girl had just recently been married, as she had, presumably she was in love with her husband and therefore not interested in anything of this nature with another man.

I asked her about her husband and she told me he was a lawyer. Although they lived in Ladaro he was senior partner of a legal firm in Almara, about twelve miles inland, and drove in to work each day and back in the evening.

I could not very well ask her bluntly, "Do you love him?" But later she said something which was perhaps revealing. When she asked how old I was and I had asked her age she said, "By Spanish standards I was getting rather old to be unmarried." Did this mean that perhaps she had settled for marriage without love, rather than be left on the shelf? But that didn't seem to make sense for a girl of twenty-four as attractive as she was.

When the sun was low and people were leaving the beach, she started getting her things together.

"I'd like to invite you to dinner," I said, "and we could go somewhere this evening. But I suppose that isn't practical."

She smiled. "No, it isn't practical. But I'll be on the beach tomorrow afternoon."

I saw her next afternoon and the afternoon following. Excitedly each day I would look forward to making my way to the beach and seeing her again. It became a strange sort of association. I never saw her in the morning. She had her marketing and such things to do. I never saw her at night, not even by chance in one of the bars or other places one went in the evening. She never went out in the town at night, although her husband did, which is not uncommon in the south of Spain. I may have seen him, without knowing, since I had no idea what he looked like.

I was full of curiosity about her husband. I looked them up in the Ladaro telephone book and then, by consulting a map of the town, I saw that they lived just five streets away from where I was staying at the Pension Lidonar. I thought of going over to their street around the time he would be leaving in his car in the morning for Almara, or in the evening when he would be coming back, just so that I could see him and know what sort of person he was. But I felt it would be rather furtive to be hanging around outside their house and it could have been embarrassing if someone had wondered what my motives were.

Each afternoon, surrounded by people on the beach, Rosario and I naturally had practically no physical contact. On meeting and when we parted she would extend her hand to shake hands, which is the strangely formal custom of the Spanish, a sort of visible token of friendship. When we were swimming I would occasionally hold her as we splashed about in the water, but with all the other swimmers around it was necessarily impersonal. From time to time, seated together on the sand, her arm or leg might touch against mine as we reached for a towel or some such thing and it would be exciting out of all proportion to how trivial it was. But that was the extent of anything physical between us, though constantly I yearned to take her in my arms and that little anguished look would come again to her face to reveal that she was going through precisely the same thing.

I said to her one afternoon, "If only I had come here last year, I'd have met you before you were married, then everything would have been different. I almost came, you know,

I fully intended taking my holiday in Spain, but at the last minute a friend of mine told me someone had lent him a villa in Deauville, which meant it would be much cheaper, so I went there instead."

She shook her head. "It wouldn't have made any difference if you'd come last year."

"Why do you say that?"

"I wasn't living here in Ladaro last year. It's only since I got married. I was in Malaga before."

I looked at her in surprise.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

"We really *were* meant to meet—when you were free, that is, before you were married."

"What do you mean?"

"It was Malaga that I was going to last year."

I had the most eerie sensation. It was as though the fates had got things wrong, some bad planning somewhere. We had surely been meant to meet and fall in love—just as desperately in love as we were there on the beach at Ladaro—but it should have happened a year previously, when she had been free to marry me.

When you reach twenty-eight you have a measure of maturity and I knew this was not just a youthful crush or a holiday infatuation. It was something that happens rarely, though constantly one seeks for it and often people try to convince themselves it has happened to them. It was a consuming sort of love, triggered off by the very first sight of the other person, two separate lives brought together and united into a wonderful entity.

But with Rosario and me a mistake had been made in the working out of these things. It had happened just a year too late. It was no good saying it wasn't too late. It was all too complicated now. The problem of divorce—never simple, well nigh insurmountable in Spain. And she couldn't just leave her husband and come and live with me in London. Neither of us would have wanted that. It would have been distasteful, out of keeping with what we felt for each other. Unable to have what should have been, we would have tried to make the best of it and it would have wound up sordid.

It seemed clear to me, then, that this was all that there was going to be to it, a series of afternoons in the sun on the beach at Ladaro—unresolved, frustrating and a source of long-felt regret.

On the following afternoon, just before it was time for us

to come away from the beach, I said to her, "My holiday's over. I'm leaving on Saturday."

"No!" Her face went sad.

"First thing in the morning."

"Then tomorrow's our last day?"

I nodded.

She was silent for some time, looking thoughtfully out to sea. Although of course she had known I would be leaving soon, it now suddenly came home to her that abruptly this was all going to end, this strange but so pleasant routine of looking forward each day to spending the afternoon together among a lot of other people on the beach.

At length she said, "Let's not come to the beach tomorrow."

My heart fell. I didn't at all want it to be a case of "let's say goodbye now." I said to her, "But I must see you on my last day."

"Yes. But not here. Shall we go for a walk tomorrow, up the valley of the Lidonar?"

"Where's that?"

"You're staying at the Pension Lidonar, you must know the valley beyond it."

"Never been up there. I've always just come down here to the beach."

"If I walk up your street tomorrow at two o'clock, would you be there waiting for me?"

"I certainly would."

That night was a restless one for me. I just could not get to sleep, thinking about Rosario and the prospect of being alone with her, for the first time with no-one else around. And throughout the morning I was in a welter of excitement at the anticipation of it.

But having done little but think about it from the time she had suggested it, when I emerged from the Pension Lidonar just before two o'clock I had my bathing suit with me, wrapped in my beach towel.

I caught sight of her coming up the street from the main road and I strolled down to meet her.

She smiled happily when she came up to me and glanced at my rolled towel and bathing suit. "What's that for?"

"I'm going swimming. I decided not to go for a walk."

"Why?"

"It's not a good idea."

She looked at me in a steady gaze for a moment or two. Then she nodded. "You are right."

She turned and as we headed away from the valley, down to the beach, I would have liked so much to have taken her hand. It was the logical thing to do. But with people likely to see us, we couldn't be logical.

"You go on down to the beach," she said. "I'll join you there when I've got my things."

"All right." Then I said, "You understand, don't you."

"Of course I do. It is much better this way."

We had walked on a couple of hundred yards in silence when, as if on cue, both of us stopped. We looked at each other. She smiled. A pained, unhappy sort of smile.

"Come on," I said. "Let's go." And we swung around and set off back up the road towards the valley.

I had in fact during my stay at the *pension* never been prompted to walk up into the valley. One goes to Spain to enjoy the swimming and the sunbathing, not to go for a walk in the country, which is something one can always do in England. So it was strange territory to me, the valley of the Lidonar.

It was in truth, at that time of year,-the dry river-bed of the meandering Lidonar—a ribbon of flat, brown silt bestrewn with boulders and stones worn smooth and round by the current when it flowed in the winter. On each side were the steeply-rising banks of parched soil and jagged rocks, dotted with tufts of rough grass. It seemed to be completely deserted there. No-one to be seen, not a sound to be heard except occasionally winged insects buzzing about in the blazing sun.

We could hold hands now as we walked, unobserved. The contact of her hand, eagerly grasping mine, sent a tremor of excitement right through me.

But we were not entirely unobserved. We came to a herd of goats, nibbling hopefully at the spikes of grass and moving, sure-footed, among the rocks and the bone-dry soil on the steep slope. There was a boy squatting nearby watching over them and his face broke into a broad grin when he saw us. He waved to us and we waved back. His clothes were in rags and he was barefooted.

I took out some money, held it up to let him see what it was and then put it on a rock by the river-bed. As we went on we glanced back and saw him scampering down the slope and when he had got the money he waved to us again, his face beaming.

One often puts off pleasant things to come, so that the

enjoyment of them will be that much heightened. It was not until we were some way up the valley that I stopped and turned to Rosario. She seemed to wish to prolong the waiting, for the same reason I had, for she stood there before me, arms by her side, just looking intently at me.

But when I kissed her, she was trembling. Her lips felt soft and warm against mine. I kissed her tenderly. Her arms went up around me and she held me gently. It was restrained and tenuous, but it was all we needed at that stage to induce the most ecstatic feeling.

Then when we were together on the towel laid out on the ground, I looked down at her, fascinated by how beautiful she was. The sun glinted on her dark hair and cast shadows across the smooth skin of her bosom. We had kissed again, passionately now, and I had held her tightly to me as I had so long wanted to. But when at length she put on her blouse again and we got up to go, that was all that there had been to it. Why, heaven alone knows. It was the sort of thing you say to yourself, years later, why on earth did I do that? Or rather, why did I hold back from doing what we both so earnestly wanted? Perhaps it was that we had been denied so much during those afternoons on the beach that when the opportunity arose, perversely I denied myself that.

I don't know what she was thinking as we walked back down the valley, hand in hand. She would look round at me from time to time and smile warmly but there was sadness there as she turned away, to walk on, her head down, pressing my hand gently.

We passed the boy and his goats again. He was sitting up there on the slope, smoking away contentedly. He gave us a cheery greeting, waving his cigarette at us. Clearly I had made his day for him. He had probably been down to his last couple of cigarettes and had been at his wits' end to know how he was going to replenish his supply.

When we came to the top of the Lidonar road, reluctantly we had to stop holding hands and we walked prudently side by side past the houses there.

At a turning just before the *pension*, she stopped and said, "I can take this road back to my place. Goodbye, darling."

My spirits were at rock bottom. I wanted to embrace her, tell her how much I loved her and perhaps somehow we could work out some way whereby . . . but instead we could just look at each other as she held out her hand and we shook hands, the Spanish token of friendship. Then I watched

her until she was out of sight around a curve in the sidestreet.

Next morning early I was on my way back to London.

Last night I was in my local pub having a drink with a friend at the bar. At a table in the corner were four young people, two boys with their girls. All were dark complexioned and they were talking animatedly in a foreign language.

"Italians," said the man I was with.

"No, that's Spanish they're speaking," I said.

We had a little argument about it and the upshot was that he bet me a drink that he was right.

Shortly, one of the young men came up to the bar to buy fresh drinks and when I asked him whether he spoke English he said that he did.

"Then perhaps you can settle an argument for us," I said. "I say you people are Spanish and my friend here says you're Italian. Which of us is right?"

"We're from Spain," he said.

"All right," my friend said to me. "I owe you a drink."

While the boy was waiting for his order I asked him whether they were on holiday in England. He explained that he and the other young man were students in London, had been here almost a year.

"Where are you from in Spain?" I asked him.

"Ladaro."

"Ladaro! I've been on holiday there."

"You liked it?"

"Yes." I paused. Perhaps it was a long chance but Ladaro wasn't that big a place and anyone living there would probably know most of the local people. "Tell me," I said, "you wouldn't happen to know someone in Ladaro called Rosario Padron?"

He gave me a surprised look. "Yes," he said, nodding his head. "That's my mother."

It was such an unbelievable coincidence to bump into him like that in a suburban London pub that I thought perhaps he was having me on. But he assured me it was true and to prove it he took an envelope from his pocket.

"My mother has just sent me over some pictures taken this summer on the beach: would you like to see them?"

He held out some snapshots and I looked at them. But in the dim lighting of the pub they were just a blur. I could merely make out what looked to be a couple on a beach, presumably Rosario and her husband.

I didn't put on my reading glasses so that I could see the pictures more clearly. It is a sad truth that when you are in your forties and need reading glasses you need them not only to read but also for looking at such things as photographs, mending a fuse and doing repairs to your youngsters' toys.

I returned the snapshots. "Yes, that's her," I said, fighting my curiosity, denying myself the opportunity to see what Rosario looked like now—or perhaps thinking it best not to know.

"You met my mother in Ladaro?" the boy asked.

"Yes."

His drinks had arrived and he paid for them. "I'll be writing to her in a day or so," he said. "Would you like me to send her your regards?"

I hesitated. Then I said, "It doesn't matter. It was quite some time ago. Perhaps she wouldn't remember me."

The others at the table were calling for the boy to hurry with the drinks and politely he excused himself and rejoined them.

"What was all that about?" my friend asked me.

"Just an odd coincidence," I said. "I met his mother when she was a girl, when I was on holiday in Ladaro. It's about eighteen years ago now."

"Ho ho!" he said archly. He looked at my face and then across at the boy. He grinned. "Yes, I can detect a certain likeness."

"Goodnight," I said.

"But you haven't finished your drink," he called after me as I got to the door and went out into the depressing drizzle.

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ANSWERS TO THE QUIZ ON PAGE 16

1. "Battleship" and "Ocean Swell."
2. 1952.
3. "Mr. What."
4. Sandown Park.
5. "Crepello."
6. (b) is shortest; (a) is longest.
7. (a) Suffolk. (b) Staffordshire.
8. Cambridgeshire Stakes.
9. Newmarket.
10. Neville Sellwood.

MAELSTROM II

HE WAS not the first man, Cliff Leyland told himself bitterly, to know the exact second and precise manner of his death; times beyond number, condemned criminals had waited for their last dawn. Yet until the very end they could have hoped for a reprieve; human judges can show mercy, but against the laws of Nature, there was no appeal.

And only six hours ago, he had been whistling happily while he packed his ten kilos of personal luggage for the long fall home. He could remember—even now, after all that had happened—how he had dreamed that Myra was already in his arms, that he was taking Brian and Sue on that promised cruise down the Nile. In a few minutes, as Earth rose above the horizon, he might see the Nile again; but memory alone could bring back the faces of his wife and children. And all because he had tried to save nine hundred and fifty sterling dollars by riding home on the freight catapult, instead of the rocket shuttle.

He had expected the first twelve seconds of the trip to be rough, as the electric launcher whipped the capsule along its ten-mile track and shot him off the Moon. Even with the protection of the water-bath in which he had floated during countdown, he had not looked forward to the 20g of take-off. Yet, when the acceleration had gripped the capsule, he had been hardly aware of the immense forces acting upon him. The only sound was a creaking from the

Caught in orbit, a man fights for survival in a new story by a brilliant exponent of space exploration

by ARTHUR C. CLARKE

from "Playboy" © *HMH Publishing Co. Inc.*, 1965

metal walls; to anyone who had experienced the thunder of a rocket launch, the silence was uncanny. When the cabin speaker had announced, "T plus 5 seconds—speed two thousand miles an hour," he could scarcely believe it.

Two thousand miles an hour in five seconds from a standing start—with seven seconds still to go as the generators smashed their thunderbolts of power into the launcher. He was riding the lightning across the face of the Moon; and at T plus 7 seconds, the lightning failed.

Even in the womb-like shelter of the tank, Cliff could sense that something had gone wrong. The water around him, until now frozen almost rigid by its weight, seemed suddenly to become alive. Though the capsule was still hurtling along the track, all acceleration had ceased and it was merely coasting under its own momentum.

He had no time to feel fear, or to wonder what had happened, for the power failure lasted little more than a second. Then, with a jolt that shook the capsule from end to end and set off a series of ominous, tinkling crashes, the field came on again.

When the acceleration faded for the last time, all weight vanished with it. Cliff needed no instrument but his stomach to tell that the capsule had left the end of the track and was rising away from the surface of the Moon. He waited impatiently until the automatic pumps had drained the tank and the hot-air driers had done their work; then he drifted across the control panel, and pulled himself down into the bucket seat.

"Launch Control," he called urgently, as he drew the restraining straps around his waist. "What the devil happened?"

A brisk but worried voice answered at once.

"We're still checking—call you back in thirty seconds. Glad you're okay," it added belatedly.

While he was waiting, Cliff switched to forward vision. There was nothing ahead except stars—which was as it should be. At least he had taken off with most of his planned speed, and there was no danger that he would crash back to the Moon's surface immediately. But he would crash back sooner or later, for he could not possibly have reached escape velocity. He must be rising out into space along a great ellipse—and, in a few hours, he would be back at his starting point.

"Hello, Cliff," said Launch Control suddenly. "We've

found what happened. The circuit breakers tripped when you went through section five of the track, so your take-off speed was 700 miles an hour low. That will bring you back in just over five hours—but don't worry; your course-correction jets can boost you into a stable orbit. We'll tell you when to fire them; then all you have to do is to sit tight until we can send someone to haul you down."

Slowly, Cliff allowed himself to relax. He had forgotten the capsule's vernier rockets; low-powered though they were, they could kick him into an orbit that would clear the Moon. Though he might fall back to within a few miles of the lunar surface, skimming over mountains and plains at a breath-taking speed, he would be perfectly safe.

Then he remembered those tinkling crashes from the control compartment, and his hopes dimmed again—for there were not many things that could break in a space-vehicle without most unpleasant consequences.

He was facing those consequences, now that the final checks of the ignition circuits had been completed. Neither on Manual nor on Auto would the navigation rockets fire; the capsule's modest fuel reserves, which could have taken him to safety, were utterly useless. In five hours, he would complete his orbit—and return to his launching point.

I wonder if they'll name the new crater after me? thought Cliff. Crater Leyland—diameter . . . What diameter? Better not exaggerate—I don't suppose it will be more than a couple of hundred yards across. Hardly worth putting on the map.

Launch Control was still silent, but that was not surprising; there was little that one could say to a man already as good as dead. And yet, though he knew that nothing could alter his trajectory, even now he did not believe that he would soon be scattered over most of Farside. He was still soaring away from the Moon, snug and comfortable in his little cabin. The idea of death was utterly incongruous—as it is to all men, until the final second.

And then, for a moment, Cliff forgot his own problem. The horizon ahead was no longer flat; something more brilliant even than the blazing lunar landscape was lifting against the stars. As the capsule curved round the edge of the Moon, it was creating the only kind of Earthrise that was possible—a man-made one. In a minute it was all over, such was his speed in orbit. By that time the Earth had leapt clear of the horizon, and was climbing swiftly up the sky.

It was three-quarters full, and almost too bright to look upon. Here was a cosmic mirror made not of dull rocks and dusty plains, but of snow and cloud and sea. Indeed, it was almost all sea, for the Pacific was turned towards him, and the blinding reflection of the sun covered the Hawaiian Islands. The haze of the atmosphere—that soft blanket that should have cushioned his descent in a few hours' time—obliterated all geographical details; perhaps that darker patch emerging from night was New Guinea, but he could not be sure.

There was a bitter irony in the knowledge that he was heading straight towards that lovely, gleaming apparition. Another seven hundred miles an hour, and he would have made it. Seven hundred miles an hour—that was all. He might as well ask for seven million.

The sight of the rising Earth brought home to him, with irresistible force, the duty he feared but could postpone no longer.

"Launch Control," he said, holding his voice steady with a great effort. "Please give me a circuit to Earth."

This was one of the strangest things he had ever done in his life—sitting here above the Moon, listening to the telephone ring in his own home, a quarter of a million miles away. It must be near midnight down there in Africa, and it would be some time before there would be any answer. Myra would stir sleepily—then, because she was a spaceman's wife, always alert for disaster, she would be instantly awake. But they had both hated to have a phone in the bedroom, and it would be at least fifteen seconds before she could switch on the lights, close the nursery door to avoid disturbing the baby, get down the stairs, and . . .

Her voice came clear and sweet across the emptiness of space. He would recognise it anywhere in the universe, and he detected at once the undertone of anxiety.

"Mrs. Leyland?" said the Earthside operator. "I have a call from your husband. Please remember the two second time-lag."

Cliff wondered how many people were listening to this call, either on the Moon, the Earth or the relay satellites. It was hard to talk for the last time to your loved ones, not knowing how many eavesdroppers there might be. But as soon as he began to speak, no-one else existed but Myra and himself.

"Darling," he began. "This is Cliff. I'm afraid I won't

be coming home as I promised. There's been a—a technical slip. I'm quite all right at the moment, but I'm in big trouble."

He swallowed, trying to overcome the dryness in his mouth, then went on quickly before she could interrupt. As briefly as he could, he explained the situation. For his own sake as well as hers, he did not abandon all hope.

"Everyone's doing their best," he said. "Maybe they can get a ship up to me in time—but in case they can't—well, I wanted to speak to you and the children."

She took it well, as he had known that she would. He felt pride as well as love when her answer came back from the dark side of Earth.

"Don't worry, Cliff. I'm sure they'll get you out, and we'll have our holiday after all, exactly the way we planned."

"I think so too," he lied. "But just in case—would you wake the children? Don't tell them that anything's wrong."

It was an endless half minute before he heard their sleepy yet excited voices. Cliff would willingly have given these last few hours of his life to have seen their faces once again, but the capsule was not equipped with such luxuries as vision. Perhaps it was just as well, for he could not have hidden the truth had he looked into their eyes. They would know it soon enough, but not from him. He wanted to give them only happiness in these last moments together.

Yet it was hard to answer their questions, to tell them that he would soon be seeing them, to make promises that he could not keep. It needed all his self-control when Brian reminded him of the moondust he had forgotten once before —but had remembered this time.

"I've got it, Brian—it's in a jar right beside me—soon you'll be able to show it to your friends." (No: soon it will be back on the world from which it came.) "And Susie—be a good girl and do everything that Mummy tells you. Your last school report wasn't too good, you know ... Yes, Brian, I have those photographs, and the piece of rock from Aristarchus—"

It was hard to die at thirty-five; but it was hard, too, for a boy to lose his father at ten. How would Brian remember him in the years ahead? Perhaps as no more than a fading voice from space, for he had spent so little time on Earth. In these last few minutes, as he swung outwards and then back to the Moon, there was little enough that he could do except project his love and his hope across the emptiness that he would never span again. The rest was up to Myra.

When the children had gone, happy but puzzled, there was work to do. Now was the time to keep one's head, to be business-like and practical. Myra must face the future without him, but at least he could make the transition easier. Whatever happens to the individual, life goes on; and to modern man, life involves mortgages and instalments, insurance policies and joint bank accounts. Almost impersonally, as if they concerned someone else—which would soon be true enough—Cliff began to talk about these things. There was a time for the heart, and a time for the brain. The heart would have its final say three hours from now, when he began his last approach to the surface of the Moon.

No-one interrupted them; there must have been silent monitors maintaining the link between two worlds, but they might have been the only people alive. Sometimes, while he was speaking, Cliff's eyes would stray to the periscope, and he was dazzled by the glare of Earth—now more than halfway up the sky. It was impossible to believe that it was home for seven billion souls. Only three mattered to him now.

It should have been four, but with the best will in the world he could not put the baby on the same footing as the others. He had never seen his youngest son; and now he never would.

At last, he could think of no more to say. For some things, a lifetime was not enough—but an hour could be too much. He felt physically and emotionally exhausted, and the strain on Myra must have been equally great. He wanted to be alone with his thoughts and with the stars, to compose his mind and to make his peace with the universe.

"I'd like to sign off for an hour or so, darling," he said. There was no need for explanations; they understood each other too well. "I'll call you back in—in plenty of time. Goodbye for now."

He waited the two and a half seconds for the answering goodbye from Earth; then he cut the circuit and stared blankly at the tiny control desk. Quite unexpectedly, without desire or volition, tears sprang into his eyes; and suddenly he was weeping like a child.

He wept for his loved ones, and for himself. He wept for the future that might have been, and the hopes that would soon be incandescent vapour, drifting between the stars. And he wept because there was nothing else to do.

After a while he felt much better. Indeed, he realised that

he was extremely hungry; there was no point in dying on an empty stomach, and he began to rummage among the space rations in the closet-sized galley. While he was squeezing a tube of chicken-and-ham paste into his mouth, Launch Control called.

There was a new voice at the end of the line—a slow, steady and immensely competent voice that sounded as if it would brook no nonsense from inanimate machinery.

"This is Van Jessel, Chief of Maintenance, Space Vehicles Division. Listen carefully, Leyland—we think we've found a way out. It's a long shot—but it's the only chance you have."

Alternations of hope and despair are hard on the nervous system. Cliff felt a sudden dizziness; he might have fallen, had there been any direction in which to fall.

"Go ahead," he said faintly, when he had recovered. Then he listened to Van Jessel with an eagerness that slowly changed to incredulity.

"I don't believe it," he said at last. "It just doesn't make sense!"

"You can't argue with the computers," answered Van Jessel. "They've checked the figures about twenty different ways. And it makes sense all right; you won't be moving so fast at apogee, and it doesn't need much of a kick then to change your orbit. I suppose you've never been in a deep-space rig before?"

"No, of course not."

"Pity—but never mind. If you follow instructions you can't go wrong. You'll find the suit in the locker at the end of the cabin. Break the seals and haul it out."

Cliff floated the full six feet from the control desk to the rear of the cabin, and pulled on the lever marked: EMERGENCY ONLY—TYPE 17 DEEP-SPACE SUIT... The door opened, and the shining silver fabric hung flaccid before him.

"Strip down to your underclothes and wriggle into it," said Van Jessel. "Don't bother about the biopack—you clamp that on later."

"I'm in," said Cliff presently. "What do I do now?"

"You wait twenty minutes—and then we'll give you the signal to open the airlock and jump."

The implications of that word "jump" suddenly penetrated. Cliff looked around the now familiar, comforting little cabin, and then thought of the lonely emptiness between the stars—the unreverberant abyss through which a man could fall.

He had never been in free space; there was no reason why he should. He was just a farmer's boy with a Master's degree in agronomy, seconded from the Sahara Reclamation Project, and trying to grow crops on the Moon. Space was not for him; he belonged to the worlds of soil and rock, of moondust and vacuum-formed pumice.

"I can't do it," he whispered. "Isn't there any other way?"

"There's not," snapped Van Jessel. "We're doing our damnedest to save you, and this is no time to get neurotic. Dozens of men have been in far worse situations—badly injured, trapped in wreckage a million miles from help. But you're not even scratched, and already you're squealing. Pull yourself together—or we'll sign off and leave you to stew in your own juice."

Cliff turned slowly red, and it was several seconds before he answered.

"I'm all right," he said at last. "Let's go through those instructions again."

"That's better," said Van Jessel approvingly. "Twenty minutes from now, when you're at apogee, you'll go into the airlock. From that point, we'll lose communication: your suit radio has only a ten mile range. But we'll be tracking you on radar and we'll be able to speak to you when you pass over us again. Now, about the controls on your suit..."

The twenty minutes went quickly enough: at the end of that time, Cliff knew exactly what he had to do. He had even come to believe that it might work.

"Time to bail out," said Van Jessel. "The capsule's correctly orientated—the airlock points the way you want to go. But direction isn't critical—*speed* is what matters. Put everything you've got into that jump—and good luck!"

"Thanks," said Cliff inadequately. "Sorry that I—"

"Forget it," interrupted Van Jessel. "Now get moving!"

For the last time, Cliff looked round the tiny cabin, wondering if there was anything that he had forgotten. All his personal belongings would have to be abandoned, but they could be replaced easily enough. Then he remembered the little jar of moondust he had promised Brian; this time, he would not let the boy down. The minute mass of the sample—only a few ounces—would make no difference to his fate; he tied a piece of string round the neck of the jar, and attached it to the harness of his suit.

The airlock was so small that there was literally no room

to move; he stood sandwiched between inner and outer doors until the automatic pumping sequence was finished. Then the wall slowly opened away from him, and he was facing the stars.

With his clumsy, gloved fingers, he hauled himself out of the airlock and stood upright on the steeply-curving hull, bracing himself tightly against it with the safety line. The splendour of the scene held him almost paralysed; he forgot all his fears of vertigo and insecurity as he gazed round him, no longer constrained by the narrow field of vision of the periscope.

The Moon was a gigantic crescent, the dividing line between night and day, a jagged arc sweeping across a quarter of the sky. Down there the sun was setting, at the beginning of the long lunar night, but the summits of isolated peaks were still blazing with the last light of day, defying the darkness that had already encircled them.

That darkness was not complete. Though the sun was gone from the land below, the almost full Earth flooded it with glory. Cliff could see, faint but clear in the glimmering Earthlight, the outlines of seas and highlands, the dim stars of mountain peaks, the dark circles of craters. He was flying above a ghostly, sleeping land—a land which was trying to drag him to his death. For now he was poised at the highest point of his orbit, exactly on the line between Moon and Earth. It was time to go.

He bent his legs, crouching against the hull. Then, with all his force, he launched himself towards the stars, letting the safety line run out behind him.

The capsule receded with surprising speed, and as it did so, he felt a most unexpected sensation. He had anticipated terror or vertigo—but not this unmistakable, haunting sense of familiarity. All this had happened before; not to him, of course, but to someone else. He could not pinpoint the memory, and there was no time to hunt for it now.

He flashed a quick glance at Earth, Moon and the receding space-craft and made his decision without conscious thought. The line whipped away as he snapped the quick-release; now he was alone—two thousand miles above the Moon, a quarter of a million miles from Earth. He could do nothing but wait; it would be two and a half hours before he would know if he could live—and if his own muscles had performed the task that the rockets had failed to do.

And then, as the stars slowly revolved around him, he suddenly knew the origin of that haunting memory. It was many years since he had read Poe's short stories; but who could ever forget them?

He, too, was trapped in a maelstrom, being whirled down to his doom; he, too, hoped to escape by abandoning his vessel. Though the forces involved were totally different, the parallel was striking. Poe's fisherman had lashed himself to a barrel because stubby, cylindrical objects were being sucked down into the great whirlpool more slowly than his ship. It was a brilliant application of the laws of hydrodynamics; Cliff could only hope that his use of celestial mechanics would be equally inspired.

How fast had he jumped away from the capsule? At a good five miles an hour, surely. Trivial though that speed was by astronomical standards, it should be enough to inject him into a new orbit—one that, Van Jessel had promised him, would clear the Moon by several miles. That was not much of a margin, but it would be enough on this airless world, where there was no atmosphere to claw him down.

With a sudden spasm of guilt, Cliff realised that he had never made that second call to Myra. It was Van Jessel's fault; the engineer had kept him on the move, giving him no time to brood over his own affairs. And Van Jessel was right: in a situation like this, a man could think only of himself. All his resources, mental and physical, must be concentrated on survival. This was no time or place for the distracting and weakening ties of love.

He was racing now towards the night side of the Moon, and the daylit crescent was shrinking even as he watched. The intolerable disc of the Sun, towards which he dared not look, was falling swiftly towards the curved horizon. The crescent moonscape dwindled to a burning line of light, a bow of fire set against the stars. Then the bow fragmented into a dozen shining beads, which one by one winked out as he shot into the shadow of the Moon.

With the going of the Sun, the earthlight seemed more brilliant than ever, frosting his suit with silver as he rotated slowly along his orbit. It took him about ten seconds to make each revolution; there was nothing he could do to check his spin, and indeed he welcomed the constantly changing view. Now that his eyes were no longer distracted by occasional glimpses of the sun, he could see the stars in thousands where there had been only hundreds before. The

familiar constellations were drowned, and even the brightest of the planets were hard to find in that blaze of light.

The dark disc of the lunar nightland lay across the starfield like an eclipsing shadow, and it was slowly growing as he fell towards it. At every instant some star, bright or faint, would pass behind its edge and wink out of existence. It was almost as if a hole were growing in space, eating up the heavens.

There was no other indication of his movement, or of the passage of time—except for his regular ten-second spin. When Cliff looked at his watch, he was astonished to see that he had left the capsule half an hour ago. He searched for it among the stars, without success. By now, it would be several miles behind—but presently it would draw ahead of him, as it moved on its lower orbit, and would be the first to reach the Moon.

Cliff was still puzzling over this paradox when the strain of the last few hours, combined with the euphoria of weightlessness, produced a result he would hardly have believed possible. Lulled by the gentle susurration of the air inlets, floating lighter than any feather as he turned beneath the stars, he fell into a dreamless sleep.

When he awoke at some prompting of his subconscious, the Earth was nearing the edge of the Moon. The sight almost brought on another wave of self-pity, and for a moment he had to fight for control of his emotions. This was the very last he might ever see of Earth, as his orbit took him back over Farside, into the land where the earthlight never shone. The brilliant Antarctic icecaps, the equatorial cloudbelts, the scintillation of the Sun upon the Pacific—all were sinking swiftly behind the lunar mountains. Then they were gone; he had neither Sun nor Earth to light him now, and the invisible land below was so black that it hurt his eyes.

Unbelievably, a cluster of stars had appeared *inside* the darkened disc, where no stars could possibly be. Cliff stared at them in astonishment for a few seconds, then realised he was passing above one of the Farside settlements. Down there beneath the pressure domes of their city, men were waiting out the lunar night; sleeping, working, loving, resting, quarrelling... Did they know that he was speeding like an invisible meteor through their sky, racing above their heads at four thousand miles an hour? Almost certainly—for by now the whole Moon, and the whole Earth, must know of his predicament. Perhaps they were searching for him with radar

and telescope, but they would have little time to find him. Within seconds, the unknown city had dropped out of sight, and he was once more alone above Farside.

It was impossible to judge his altitude above the blank emptiness speeding below, for there was no sense of scale or perspective. Sometimes it seemed that he could reach out and touch the darkness across which he was racing, yet he knew that in reality it must still be many miles beneath him. But he also knew that he was still descending, and that at any moment one of the crater walls or mountain peaks that strained invisibly towards him might claw him from the sky.

For in the darkness somewhere ahead was the final obstacle —the hazard he feared most of all. Across the heart of Farside, spanning the equator from north to south in a wall more than a thousand miles long, lay the Soviet Range. He had been a boy when it was discovered, back in 1959, and could still remember his excitement when he had seen the first smudged photographs from Lunik III. He could never have dreamed that one day he would be flying towards those same mountains, waiting for them to decide his fate.

The first eruption of dawn took him completely by surprise. Light exploded ahead of him, leaping from peak to peak until the whole arc of the horizon was limned with flame. He was hurtling out of the lunar night, directly into the face of the sun. At least he would not die in darkness, but the greatest danger was yet to come. For now he was almost back where he had started, nearing the lowest point of his orbit. He glanced at the suit chronometer, and saw that five full hours had now passed. Within minutes, he would have hit the Moon—or skimmed it and passed safely out into space.

As far as he could judge, he was less than twenty miles above the surface, and he was still descending, though very slowly now. Beneath him, the long shadows of the lunar dawn were daggers of darkness, stabbing into the night land. The steeply slanting sunlight exaggerated every rise in the ground, making even the smallest hills appear mountains. And now, unmistakably, the land ahead was rising, wrinkling into the foothills of the Soviet Range.

More than a hundred miles away, but approaching at a mile a second, a wave of rock was climbing from the face of the Moon. There was nothing he could do to avoid it; his path was fixed and unalterable. All that could be done had already been done, two and a half hours ago.

It was not enough. He was not going to rise above these mountains; they were rising above him.

Now he regretted his failure to make that second call to the woman who was still waiting, a quarter of a million miles away. Yet perhaps it was just as well, for there had been nothing more to say.

Other voices were calling in the space around him, as he came once more within range of Launch Control. They waxed and waned as he flashed through the radio-shadow of the mountains; they were talking about him, but the fact scarcely registered on his emotions. He listened with an impersonal interest, as if to messages from some remote point of space or time, of no concern to him. Once he heard Van Jessel's voice say, quite distinctly, "Tell *Callisto*'s skipper we'll give him an intercept orbit, as soon as we know that Leyland's past perigee. Rendezvous time should be one hour five minutes from now."

I hate to disappoint you, thought Cliff, but that's one appointment I'll never keep.

For now the wall of rock was only fifty miles away, and each time he spun helplessly in space it came ten miles closer. There was no room for optimism now, as he sped more swiftly than a rifle bullet towards that implacable barrier.

This was the end, and suddenly it became of great importance to know whether he would meet it face first, with open eyes, or with his back turned, like a coward.

No memories of his past life flashed through Cliff's mind as he counted the seconds that remained. The swiftly unrolling moonscape rotated beneath him, every detail sharp and clear in the harsh light of dawn. Now he was turned away from the onrushing mountains, looking back on the path he had travelled, the path that should have led to Earth. No more than three of his ten-second days were left to him.

And then the moonscape exploded into silent flame. A light as fierce as that of the sun banished the long shadows, struck fire from the peaks and craters spread below. It lasted only for a fraction of a second, and had faded.

Directly ahead of him, only twenty miles away, a vast cloud of dust was expanding towards the stars. It was as if a volcano had erupted in the Soviet Range—but that, of course, was impossible. Equally absurd was Cliff's second thought—that by some fantastic feat of organisation and logistics the Farside Engineering Division had blasted away the obstacle in his path.

For it was gone. A huge, crescent-shaped bite had been taken out of the approaching skyline; rocks and debris were still rising from a crater that had not existed five seconds ago. Only the energy of an atomic bomb, exploded at precisely the right moment in his path, could have wrought such a miracle. And Cliff did not believe in miracles.

He had made another complete revolution, and was almost upon the mountains, when he remembered that all this while, there had been a cosmic bulldozer moving invisibly ahead of him. The kinetic energy of the abandoned capsule—a thousand tons, travelling at over a mile a second—was quite sufficient to have blasted the gap through which he was now racing. The impact of the man-made meteor must have jolted the whole of Farside.

His luck held to the very end. There was a brief pitter-patter of dust particles against his suit, and he caught a blurred glimpse of glowing rocks and swiftly dispersing smoke clouds flashing beneath him. (How strange to see a cloud upon the Moon!) Then he was through the mountains, with nothing ahead but blessed, empty sky.

Somewhere up there, an hour in the future along his second orbit, *Callisto* would be moving to meet him. But there was no hurry now; he had escaped from the maelstrom. For better or for worse, he had been granted the gift of life.

There was the launching track, a few miles to the right of his path; it looked like a hairline scribed across the face of the Moon. In a few moments he would be within radio range; now, with thankfulness and joy, he could make that second call to Earth, to the woman who was still waiting in the African night.

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD

(*JULY ISSUE*)

Across. 1, *Win the toss.* 6, *Trio.* 9, *Salamander.* 10, *Spot.* 12, *Prised.* 14, *Amble.* 17, *War.* 18, *Turntable.* 21, *Bride.* 22, *Grace.* 23, *Ill-zt-ease.* 25, *Ewe.* 26, *Creed.* 27, *Flashy.* 32, *Aida.* 33, *Fairground.* 34, *Hand.* 35, *Heel-and-toe.*

Down. 1, *West.* 2, *Nile.* 3, *Homer.* 4, *Tanks* 5, *Speedwell.* 7, *Republican.* 8, *On the level.* 11, *Barbet.* 13, *Ida.* 15, *Stage-coach.* 16, *Armageddon.* 19, *Tweeds.* 20, *Briefcase.* 24, *Ass.* 28, *April.* 29, *Heron.* 30, *Hunt.* 31, *Adze.*

conversational ball

by PETER DE VRIES

I SUPPOSE it's true enough that women talk too much and, conversely, husbands never listen. A proper conjunction of these two clichés of human conduct can produce a crisis of anything but trite proportions, as was proved by a recent incident of which I still bear the scars—or will as soon as the wounds heal. Even now I have this queasy apprehension that the worst is yet to come. The qualm before the storm, you might say.

I was drinking coffee in my favourite chair, one evening after dinner several weeks ago, when I dimly sensed that my wife was discoursing at length on something that perhaps required closer attention than, through the fog of abstraction with which I listened, I was paying it. She was in fact relating a dream she had had but, like a late theatregoer who has missed an essential piece of exposition, I didn't learn that until it was too late. I thought she was talking about something that had happened to her that day, or maybe the day before.

"I was wearing my new slacks—you know, the pink ones with the flower print," she was saying, "and I was walking downtown. As I turned the corner and passed the library, I met Jack Brady. We stopped a minute to talk."

"Oh? How is Jack?" I asked, showing some interest.

"What?"

"How is Jack?"

"All right, I guess. Why? What has that got to do with it? You see him on the train."

"Not every day. He doesn't even go in every day, as you

know." I was only trying to keep the conversational ball rolling. "But go on. What then?"

"Well, suddenly he looked down at my slacks and started to laugh. He asked whether they were new, and I said yes, and he laughed again."

"Why, that son of a bitch," I said. "It's just like him, though. Jack likes to think he's the answer to every woman's prayer, but he's really a pain in the pancreas. So what happened then? What did you say?"

"Well, naturally I took offence, and asked him what he meant. He kind of looked away and said what he meant was that I was one of the few women who understood the art of dressing absurdly. He was trying to cover up, you see."

"He's a lout. Yet at the same time mealy-mouthed. Then what?"

"Then I left him, and hadn't gone far up Main Street when I was glad to run into Louise Maley, dressed in slacks, like me, and I told her what Jack Brady had said. Then we decided to have a cup of tea together . . ."

Here my attention wandered again from an account of what was an apparently interminable ramble through town. Catching a word here and there to keep some vague connection with the thread of the narrative, I turned over in my mind the prospects of lunch in town the next day with an office colleague of tender years and notable charms. I mentally sorted out the various midtown restaurants from among which a choice might be made, occasionally turning to nod at my wife with the expression of an intelligent listener.

I forgot about the whole thing until the next morning when I caught sight of Jack Brady in the restaurant car on the way to the city, and I bristled. The restaurant car is not serving at that hour, of course, but Jack is one of the *habitués* who ride it then in anticipation of the evening return, when it is. His eyes seemed a little bleary now, probably the result of a heavy load the night before, and I hoped for his sake he had had a few when he had insulted my wife. I could clearly not let that pass, though obviously I would not stop to make an issue of it in public—even the low-consciousness public represented by the score or so of somnambulists slumped behind the *Times*. I returned his greeting with a curt snub, and went on through to a coach farther up front.

Settled down in a seat there, I found myself unable to concentrate on my own *Times*. The challenge I must raise,

and the "satisfaction" I would positively require, hung like a cloud over my day. Well before we reached the city, I had decided to have it out the minute we pulled into Grand Central Station.

I was waiting for him at the train gate as he made his way along the station platform.

"Jack," I said, accosting him.

"Hi," he said. "What is it?" He looked really awful, close up. His eyes were red-rimmed, and he was coughing into a handkerchief. He had evidently caught a summer cold.

"I want to talk to you a minute. Let's step over here."

With a jerk of my head, I led the way back inside the train gate and towards a baggage cart, behind which it seemed to me we could most decently have this thing out. We both had on gabardine suits, and we were swinging attaché cases of the same shape, colour, and size, and I had a brief, surrealist vision of two commuters flailing one another to death with identical luggage—*reductio ad absurdum* of the Age of Conformity. Well, chivalry, at least, was not dead.

When we were out of view, I turned and faced him squarely.

"Look, fellow, I take exception to that crack you made to my wife," I said.

"What crack?" he said. "What are you talking about?"

"You know very well what I mean. The slacks. That seem to refresh your memory, Jack?"

His face was something to behold as he coughed again into the handkerchief, which he had not yet pocketed, looking away and shaking his head in puzzlement. "When was this?"

I opened my mouth to answer several times before a lull in his coughing-fit permitted. The whole thing was like some dream. "Don't stall. It doesn't become you, and hardly serves to dignify this thing. You know very well when this was, and what it was. It so happens that I think my wife looks very good in slacks."

"Why, none better, man, but whah—?"

"Soft soap will get you nowhere. We don't behave towards women that way—that's the long and the short of it. I demand an apology, not to me but to her," I said, and added, tapping him on the chest, "and I demand it by tonight!" With that, I turned on my heel and marched out of the station.

As can be imagined, my day in the city was not in the least brightened by the relief of having spoken up and got that part of it over with. It was a rotten day, hardly improved

when this office colleague of mine turned out to be busy for lunch. "I have a date with this, um, friend I met at the party in Teaneck I was telling you about," she said.

She was apparently ignorant of the present-day vogue decreeing that young girls be seen in the best restaurants with older men, nor had I the time or the strength to try to bring her *au courant* just now. I had a grilled-cheese sandwich sent up to my office, and relieved my solitude by munching it into suggestive shapes. It had come uncut, and I was able, by careful nibbling from the crusts inward, to mould it into a very satisfactory female silhouette—which I immediately defaced into a lampoon of this office colleague by adding the two pickle slices for big feet, and making a funny hat of strands of the coleslaw that accompanied the sandwich in a small fluted cup, complete with disposable plastic fork. I had this composition laid out on the wax wrapper on top of my desk, and was admiring the effect as I sipped iced tea from a container when my telephone rang. It was my wife.

"What. In heaven's name. Have you done. Now?" she said, spacing her words in the dramatically clipped manner of one long burdened with the need for some device to express utter and total exasperation.

"Why? What have I done now?"

"Jack Brady just called me, from the city—"

"As damn well he might. I buttonholed him this morning and insisted on an apology."

"What for?"

"For that crack he made about your slacks. What else?"

"That's what I thought."

There was a long sigh, after which she said, "Now, look. Are you listening very carefully now, for once? Because this time— What's that guzzling noise? Are you drinking something?"

"Just some iced tea. In my office. But shoot. What's this all about?"

"It's all about some more confusion created by your not paying any attention to anything anyone tells you. But listen very closely now. *That was a dream I was telling you about,* not something that happened. Jack didn't say it to me, I dreamt he did, that's all."

"Oh, good lord," I said. "I'm sorry. I've made a mess of things. Poor Jack. And you, too. I'm terribly sorry. But I'll make it up to you, and I'll square it with Jack."

"No. The best thing is to forget about the whole business.

I think I handled it the only way. He really did call to apologise, figuring he *had* said something to me after a few drinks at that beach party the other night. It wouldn't be the first time he couldn't remember what he said to somebody. It's always happening to him. I just said that you had misunderstood what I'd told you—a mixup for everybody to forget as soon as possible. I didn't tell him the truth. Confusion now hath made his masterpiece, but I do think it's better this way, and lets him off just as well. And maybe after this you'll listen when somebody's talking to you. Goodbye!"

The aftermath can be readily imagined. I listen attentively these days when nothing much is being said. The corrosive silences are, however, gradually beginning to diminish in both length and severity, and despite the occasional twinges of apprehension that the worst is yet to come, I hope that things will soon be back to normal. Meanwhile, there was a kind of epilogue to the whole episode that rounds it off.

This business colleague came into my office one day to announce that the courtship by the chap in Teaneck had proved to be whirlwind, and flashed a ring to prove it. She then hemmed and hawed a moment in a way that indicated she had a favour to ask.

"I don't know what to give him for a wedding present, personally, from me," she said, "and I was wondering if you might have any suggestions. Get the point of view of a man who's more, um, seasoned."

"If you're free for lunch, we can discuss it," I said.

I knew instantly what to suggest, but didn't spring my idea till we were well into our brandies. "By all means give him a leather club chair," I said. "A plain, old-fashioned, leather club chair is what every man wants but nobody ever thinks of getting him. Go to Macy's. I got mine there."

She nodded thoughtfully, while I smiled inscrutably to myself, knowing what she did not know but would soon enough learn: to wit, the sequel to the fairy tale that she was, for a brief moment, living. The princess is awakened from her sleep by the kiss of a true lover, all right enough, but that's not the end of the story by a long shot.

Some of us are familiar with the fuller version, which is never told. How they get married, and how after dinner they sit down together and she begins to talk to him. And she talks and she talks, till his head nods on his chest, and he sleeps, for ever, and ever, and ever.

picnic

by H.E.BATES

NOW you won't on any account be late for the picnic on Saturday, will you?" Aunt Leonora said. "I want everybody here as sharp as a packet of pins on the dot of eleven. If your Uncle Freddie's going to get in an hour's fishing before lunch we must make a good early start."

With that casual amiability I always reserved for these charming and unheralded surprises of Aunt Leonora's I inquired to know what picnic?

My aunt and I were sitting in the garden on the lawn, under the deep shade of a large Blenheim apple tree. It was late June and the young apples were about the size of walnuts. Many had already fallen but now, as if struck by the winging shrillness of Aunt Leonora's voice, a few more pattered down from the boughs.

"Great heavens, man," she said, "you can't have forgotten the picnic? It was all arranged the very last time you were here."

It was a typical blatant, thundering lie. I knew of no such picnic. I knew that none had ever been arranged. That a picnic obviously existed in the mind of Aunt Leonora I knew beyond all possible doubt, just as I knew that for her a lie was the truth provided she thought it up fast enough.

"I don't think," I said, "I could have been here when you arranged it."

"Not here? You hear that, Freddie?" she called. "What a spoof! He's trying to say he wasn't here when we arranged the picnic. Of course you were here! We were all sitting exactly where we are now. Freddie, isn't that so?"

Uncle Freddie, rotund, radish-pink and utterly unassertive, lay in a hammock attached to the far side of the apple tree, enjoying his customary zizz in the warmth of the afternoon. He waved, without a word, what might have been a dissentient hand but equally one that didn't care.

"In fact," she said to me, revealing in the sweetest of smiles those large, long teeth of hers, "you actually threw out the idea yourself. 'Let's have a fishing picnic,' you said, 'on the mill lake. Just like the one we had last year.'"

I couldn't help admiring the words "threw out." They had a marvellous casual cunning of their own. They almost had

Walking back, I couldn't help thinking that perhaps she had after all made a mistake

me believing, for one moment, that I had actually concocted this myth of picnics, even the one from last year.

"Moreover you promised to bring that girl—that rather jolly one—what is her name? Penelope."

With amiable restraint I begged to inform Aunt Leonora that I knew of no girl named Penelope.

"Well, it's a name of that sort. Something like it."

"Is it?" I said. "And when was she last on the scene?"

"Oh, you remember as plain as a pikestaff. You'd been to the point-to-point races on Easter Saturday and you met two girls and brought them along here afterwards. With a young man named Tim or something. Tom it might have been."

"It so happens that I never go to point-to-point races," I said. "I loathe them."

"Well, you'd been *somewhere.*"

"It was Tim Walters who had been to the point-to-point. I was out for a walk when he stopped and gave me a lift and dropped me here. You were clipping the garden hedge and you asked us in for a glass of redcurrant wine."

"I remember the girls so well," she suddenly said, with a beautiful, half-absent breeziness. "The one called Penelope was the jolly one, full of mischief—"

"Her name is Peggy."

"Very well, Peggy."

"And she isn't the jolly one. She's the rather shy one."

"Oh, I thought that was Violet."

"Valerie," I said. "She's the jolly one. She's Tim's sister."

"Oh, really?" she said. "I thought they were married."

"Marrying your sister," I said, "isn't generally done."

"Oh, well, then they should have been. I thought they were admirably suited to each other."

Aunt Leonora is a divine, even lovable, crackpot. Many people are tone-deaf or colour-blind or lacking a sense of humour or smell; in Aunt Leonora there are merely strange fundamental forces at work that prevent her from distinguishing, even remotely, between truth and falsehood, fact and fancy. For these reasons she is also a schemer; she for ever seeks to put things right. If two people are not friends when she thinks they ought to be friends, she will strive indefatigably to make them friends, even to the point of total disaster. When she dies there will be carved on her tomb—or should be—the words *There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will*, and she, I fear, will have been the divinity. She is the great divine end-shaper of all time.

"Anyway, these are the three people you'd like to come to the picnic, are they?" she said, again with that bland, toothy smile.

It was monstrous. It was also impossible.

"Tim," I said, "is in Cape Town. He's taken a job there."

"But his wife and the other girl will come."

"Not his wife. His sister."

"Anyway she's the quiet one."

"She is not the quiet one."

"Anyway, they'll come, won't they?"

"I haven't asked them."

"But good grief, man, you must. You're getting awfully slack, aren't you? I've already asked another young man. There'll be just a nice round six of us."

"What young man?"

Here Aunt Leonora proceeded to describe, in the vaguest possible terms, a young man she sometimes met at the public library. She thought his name was Bennett or Barnett or something of that sort. Her chief impression of him was that he seemed woefully undernourished. He was distressingly thin. He lacked fresh air. He seemed to read mostly books on engineering or science or kindred subjects and had a rather prominent mole on one cheek or the other and was going rapidly and prematurely bald.

"Any idea of his first name?" I said.

"I rather fancy it's David."

"It sounds like a man named David Benson I know vaguely. He works in insurance."

"That's it. Benson."

"And what, pray, made you ask him?"

In answer she gave me one of those dark, meaningful glares, full of sinister suspicion, that were so typical of her.

"*I thought he ought to be taken out of himself.*"

I was about to suggest that perhaps he didn't want taking out of himself, but finally I decided to let this almost accusative piece of information pass without a word. It was just as well I did so because, a moment later, she broke into what sounded like a concluding twitter of song.

"Well, then, that's just about all fixed. I've asked Mr. Benson. You'll ask the girls. Uncle Freddie will see to the rods and tackle. And what would you like to eat?"

"Now?"

"No, no. For the picnic. Freddie!" she suddenly called. "What sort of food do you fancy for the picnic?"

As if from the end of an invisible telephone line Uncle Freddie replied with remarkable alacrity, "Pork pie and cucumber salad."

"Oh, no, that's dull. That's ghastly. That's cowardice."

It seemed to me that at this moment Uncle Freddie, so peremptorily crushed, slipped suddenly deeper into the hammock and the zizz.

"You know what I thought would be *an absolutely marvellous thing*?"

Amiable again, I begged her to tell me.

"I think we should picnic off the land."

"Good God," I said.

This unlikely and impractical prospect so alarmed me that it was some moments before I could remind her that she hated shooting, hunting and violence of any kind to animals and birds and that she only tolerated fishing for Uncle Freddie's sake.

"I really meant picnic off the water," she said.

"Good God," I said. "Not fish?"

"Why not? I was thinking principally of perch. I once had them in Switzerland. On the lake of Geneva. *Filets de perche.* With local white wine. Absolutely delicious."

"But supposing," I said, "we don't catch any perch?"

She merely gave me the toothiest of white smiles. "We'll guard against that eventuality by taking smoked trout along."

"Oh," I said.

Perhaps that was cowardice too but it was all, for the moment, I could think of to say. Inwardly I felt my heart grieve for the undernourished Mr. Benson. I seemed to see, in imagination, the jolly, healthy, mischievous figure of Valerie, a girl whose bouncing frame needed strong sustenance if ever living creature did, sucking on the pale bones of a four-ounce perch.

"Don't you think," I said, "that we shall perhaps need something more substantial?"

"Oh, that's all arranged," she said with the most disarming brightness, "I'm making a big steak and kidney pie. We'll have it cold. And salads and apricot tarts and things of that sort. Oh, nobody will starve! It was just that I thought we ought to have one little touch of the wild."

"One touch," I said, "will undoubtedly make the whole world kin."

"What was that? What were you muttering about?"

"Nothing at all. Just thinking aloud."

"Well, just don't. It's an extremely bad habit. I've told you before. It's worse than thinking with your eyes."

A moment later she turned swiftly from these dark accusations to call yet again to Uncle Freddie, "Freddie, what do perch eat?"

"Worms."

"Then you must be up at crack of dawn, don't forget. Digging."

From the round radishy figure of my Uncle Freddie there came, in answer, one brief sound. It might have been the croaking of a snoozing frog.

By half-past eleven on Saturday morning I was lowering, gently and indeed with some reverence, half a dozen bottles of redcurrant wine into a shallow pool on the mill lake, under the dark shade of an alder tree. The morning had on it a blissful and somnolent bloom, tenderly hazy and without glare. The surface of the lake even reeked with misty steam.

"Where are those two children?" Aunt Leonora demanded, I think perhaps for the third or fourth time and as if she didn't know. "Lost their way, I shouldn't wonder."

Aunt Leonora continually sought in other people, but rarely found it, that quality of restless and unflagging energy with which she attacked everything in life from chasing mythical marauders from her garden to making currant wine and custard tarts. "Those children," were the undernourished Mr. Benson and the shy Peggy Mortimer, who were somewhere bringing up the rear of our fishing column with a large basketwork hamper containing picnic plates, cutlery and food.

Aunt Leonora had enlisted them into this task with blatant deliberation, simply with the unashamed purpose of throwing them together. It was clearly her first move in taking Mr. Benson out of himself.

"They get on absolutely splendidly together, don't you think?" she said, airily tossing the first part of the sentence to Valerie and the second to me. "They sort of went for each other from the word go."

Again I couldn't help admiring her choice of words. "They sort of went for each other from the word go," was just another characteristic, charming lie. No two people could ever have ached more not to be left alone together.

"There's a sort of fusion when some people meet," she said, "isn't there?"

I didn't bother to answer this but merely winked, sideways,

at Valerie. With her extraordinary golden-brown eyes, that had in them some of the hazy languor of the morning air, she winked back at me, but whether in understanding or out of sheer mischievous habit or in secret invitation about something I had no time to decide.

"Now off you go collecting wood, you two!" Aunt Leonora said. "Nice dry pieces. Ash, if possible. That burns so well."

"I thought of helping Uncle Freddie with the rods and tackle—" I started to say.

Aunt Leonora peremptorily cut me off by brandishing the frying pan into the air.

"Oh, don't disturb the man! He likes to do it himself, in his own way."

"Absolutely sure you don't need any help, Uncle Freddie?" I said.

Uncle Freddie, puffing with enormous contentment at his big brown pipe, merely shook his head and said, "No. Thanks all the same, dear boy."

"There!" she said. "I told you so. Now off you go, you and Peggy. Wooding."

"This," I said blandly, "happens to be Valerie."

"Oh, does it?" she said, and gave me one of those remarkably dark accusative glares of hers, actually as if it were I who was now telling the lies.

So we went off to collect firewood, Valerie and I, walking slowly to the far end of the lake, in a morning that seemed to grow more exquisite in its summer embalmment every second. Deep woods of hazel and chestnut and alder fringed the lake on all sides and at the very far end of it a few wild duck were placidly paddling among islands of waterlilies, the new yellow buds of the flowers rising like crook-necked snakes among them. In the deepest shade of the woods, where no sun had penetrated for weeks, a few drifts of late bluebells still bloomed, smoky mauve.

Valerie was one of those charming animals whose presence is entirely physical. She was wearing lemon linen shorts and an emerald nylon blouse and her legs and arms were deeply tanned and bare. In the water she would have been a big golden fish; on land she was more like a large, affectionate, beautiful dog, with smooth glistening brown hair and an occasional habit of brushing her body against you.

"And what," she suddenly said to me, "was the meaning of the big wink back there?"

I told her; I informed her frankly that in my opinion my Aunt Leonora was simply doing her damnedest to fix a match between Peggy and the undernourished Mr. Benson.

"Oh, don't be silly!"

"Absolutely as plain as daylight."

"You've got a suspicious mind."

"Not on your life. It's an old habit of hers."

At this she stopped on the path, in the warm sunlight now breaking through the haze, and turned to me. She was framed against the barely-turning lower leaves of a big silver poplar and she suddenly gave me the slowest and most mischievous of smiles.

"You wouldn't by any chance suppose she had designs for us too?"

"Not impossible."

"In that case," she said, "aren't we going to do anything about it?"

I murmured that I didn't see any reason at all why not and then put my arms round her and kissed her long and full on the mouth. The effect of this was that my body seemed to become a cello on which the very deepest reverberating notes were being played. The effect on her was startlingly different. She finally held her big body away from me, locking her hands softly round the nape of my neck, and smiled full into my eyes.

"You know what?" she said. "Kissing always makes me terribly hungry."

"Glad to have been of service."

"I suppose it's something to do with the mouth. But when you kissed me just now my stomach turned over and I started thinking about steak and kidney pie and salads and bread and cheese and custard tarts and all that sort of thing."

"And perch."

"Why perch?"

I briefly explained about the perch; I told her about the touch of the wild. She just laughed and said, "Well, in that case the sooner we get back and start fishing the better."

"You have," I said, "the most charming way of putting things."

Walking back, as we gathered firewood, I couldn't help thinking that perhaps Aunt Leonora had after all made a mistake, that morning, in her careful arrangement of partners. It was really the shy Mr. Benson who should have been wooding with Valerie, in the idyllic world of wild duck, yellow

waterlilies and silver poplar leaves. She, undoubtedly, would have taken him clearly and finally out of himself.

But it was too late for such changes now, as I instantly discovered when we got back to where Aunt Leonora and Peggy were already laying out, in the alder shade, picnic cloth, knives and forks, pepper and salt and glasses.

In that distinctive, high-pitched voice of hers, Aunt Leonora was saying, "Never fished before? I'll bet a million to one he'll have beginner's luck. He's just that sort. He'll catch an outrageous whopper. You see."

At these extravagant and prophetic praises of Mr. Benson, Peggy merely smiled shyly and polished a wine glass with a teacloth.

"You can feel it in some men," Aunt Leonora said. "Aren't you lucky?"

She could hardly have spoken with greater candour if she had suddenly speculated on the actual date of the wedding or something of that sort. She was once again at work as the great end-shaper and suddenly, almost punctually on the stroke of midday, prophecy was fulfilled. I heard a sudden excited shout from Uncle Freddie, thirty yards or so down the lake, where he and Mr. Benson were already fishing.

"Hold it! Take it steady! I'll get the net!"

I promptly dropped a whole armful of wood and ran down to the lakeside. Uncle Freddie had the net in his hands and in the net was a splendid green-gold acrobatic perch, of nearly a pound and a half in weight, glistening in the sun.

The expression on the pallid Mr. Benson's face was one of catastrophe. It might have been the look on the face of a man who, by some ghastly mischance, had just killed a child. It was chalky with fright. His hands were trembling too and his mouth actually fell open, in an extraordinarily fishlike way, as he watched Uncle Freddie take the hook from the perch's mouth and lay the squirming fish on the grass in the sun.

"Good heavens!" Aunt Leonora said, rushing forward and peering excitedly through her flashing spectacles. "What a beauty. There! Didn't I tell you?"

These last words were addressed to Peggy, who had crept up behind us with the reticence of someone coming to peer at a graveside. Her shyness was now composed completely of disbelief, which Aunt Leonora instantly shattered with another triumphant burst of candour: "It's quite obvious you two will never starve!"

Aunt Leonora now looked almost ready to embrace Mr.

Benson; he might have been on the verge of entering the bosom of the family. Like a shy hero he stood watching Uncle Freddie putting another gluey pink worm on the hook and heard Valerie add still further to his discomfiture by saying, with a luscious laugh, " My, my, a positive Izaak Walton."

Peggy blushed deeply and with unconcealed pain. Uncle Freddie, for once really excited, declared that perch, once they got started, were great feeders. Mr. Benson must therefore get at 'em; we must all get at 'em; in no time at all we'd be pulling them out by the score.

" *Filets de perche!*" Aunt Leonora exclaimed. " Thank heaven, I brought plenty of black pepper and butter."

Uncle Freddie, Mr. Benson and I now began feverishly to fish and soon Mr. Benson, blessed by that uncanny luck that so often falls on the shoulders of beginners, was pulling out perch at the rate of one every four minutes or so. Each time he hooked a fresh one the thrill of fright went through him again, completely draining his face of blood.

Soon wood smoke was blowing fragrantly on the air.

" Somebody start bringing the fish so that I can scale and fillet them," Aunt Leonora called. " How many now?"

I started off towards the fire, carrying half a dozen fair-sized perch in Uncle Freddie's creel. The lunch cloth was now spread out, filled with good things. Like a golden-brown crown, the steak and kidney pie, in a big round baking dish, sat in the centre of an array of salads, tomatoes, radishes, brown and white loaves, cheeses, custard tarts and fresh strawberries and cream.

Every now and then Aunt Leonora peered excitedly at the fish, pointedly asking to know what lucky, clever man had caught them all.

" Mr. Benson," I said. " Uncle Freddie and I haven't had a touch."

" What a man! What a wizard!"

After this fulsome burst of praise for Mr. Benson she turned on me with one of those accusatory thrusts of hers and said she didn't suppose she could rely on me to gut and fillet the fish.

I said no, indeed, she couldn't.

" If you want anything doing, do it yourself," she said. " It's extraordinary what hidden talents *some* men have."

I murmured that this equally applied to some women too.

" Eh? What was that?" she said. " Mumbling again. Get me some water. There's a washing-up bowl somewhere."

I picked up a white enamel bowl and went down to the lake's edge to dip water. A young green frog jumped out of a bed of reeds as I filled the bowl and fell into the lake with the merest whisper of a plop. I watched it swim away and then walked back to the picnic fire just in time to hear Aunt Leonora say, "Uncle Freddie was another dark horse. You'd never think he had it in him."

This blatant piece of observation wasn't exactly a lie; it was just plain outrage. What was worse, she said it with an almost innocent lack of shame. It was exactly as if she were now trying to present Mr. Benson not merely as the great angler but as the potential great lover, a Casanova, or something of that sort.

It was small wonder Valerie winked at me. This time I didn't wink back. Instead I was taken completely by surprise by seeing Aunt Leonora suddenly slit a perch up the belly with all the deftness of an extremely practised fishmonger. A moment later a cloud of blood filled the bowl and for a moment I thought Peggy would be sick.

By now the morning was growing hot and it seemed to me an appropriate moment to test the temperature of the red-currant wine. I went to fetch a bottle from the lake. It was already beautifully cool but Aunt Leonora looked at it with a glare of dark disapprobation.

"And who gave you permission to start on the wine?"

"Uncle Freddie."

"Don't fib."

I said I liked this. And added, "You, I suppose, don't want any?"

"Good grief, man, don't be dim. And you'd better take a glass to Mr. Benson. *He* certainly deserves it."

The two girls, I noticed, had retreated for a walk. Blood, scales, fins, tails and fish-gut were strewn everywhere. A strange, half-muddy, half-fishy odour hung on the air. I felt my appetite start to drift away.

Farther down the lake Mr. Benson's luck, perhaps happily, had started to wane. He too was hot. Sweat was pouring from his brow and nose. Uncle Freddie greeted the sight of the wine with cries of relish and an enthusiastic, "Splendid thought, dear boy. Bless you. Absolute salvation."

Parched with excitement and thirst, Mr. Benson sat on the bank and drank the wine in deep draughts, as if it had been mere rose-coloured water.

"Any more fish?" I said.

Uncle Freddie said only two and not very large at that. They seemed, he thought, to be suddenly off feed. I said I would take them and a moment later started to carry away, in the keep-net, the brace of perch, not much more than tiddlers: so small indeed that halfway to the camp fire, as much out of selfish regard for my appetite as a sense of pity, I dropped them quietly back into the lake.

Gold spectacles dancing, her hands bloody as if from some messy sacrifice, Aunt Leonora demanded to know how the miraculous Mr. Benson was faring now? His luck, I told her, had left him; the fish were suddenly off feed. This information, far from lowering Mr. Benson in her eyes, merely seemed to elevate him farther and she gave a half-ecstatic gasp and said, "He's been marvellous. He's saved the morning. Isn't she lucky?"

"Isn't who lucky?"

"That girl. Valerie."

"*Not* Valerie. Anyway, here they are coming back. For heaven's sake, take a good look at them. Valerie's the big golden one—"

She wasn't listening. Instead she was washing her hands of blood. When they were dry and clean again she laid a number of perch fillets, I think twelve or fourteen of them, side by side in the frying pan. They were a queer greenish mud colour, not at all unlike the colour of the frog I had seen jump into the lake, but she dabbed lavish lumps of butter all over them with something like reverent rapture.

"Put more sticks on the fire. And where is the wine, for heaven's sake? I suppose you men have been fairly slopping it down."

I put more wood on the fire; I said I would go to fetch the wine; and as I walked away I heard her call in shrill double command, "Girls! Start cutting bread. And call Uncle Freddie and dear Mr. Benson. They've five minutes to get their hands washed. I'm cooking."

When I got back from fetching the wine and instructing Uncle Freddie and Mr. Benson to get ready for lunch the strangest of odours filled the air. It floated everywhere with a sickly twang, a noisome compound of wood smoke, burning butter, drying mud and a fishmonger's backyard on a hot afternoon. There was also a monstrous sizzling to be heard as Aunt Leonora poked and turned the fish with an egg-slice.

Valerie, I noticed, was vigorously making up her face and

heavily spattering her bosom with perfume, but whatever scent she was using faded on the air like a delicate moth against a powerful flight of hornets. By contrast Peggy seemed shyer, quieter than ever and, I thought, awfully, ominously pale.

Some minutes later Mr. Benson and Uncle Freddie came slowly up the lake path, each carrying two bottles of wine. Ten yards from the fire Uncle Freddie suddenly stopped dead, said "Good God," in an alarmingly loud voice and recoiled a good two feet from the pan of perch.

"And what are you good-Godding about? You've washed your hands, I hope? Sit yourselves down—we're nearly ready."

"I mean it's awfully hot—I mean the fire—"

"Mr. Benson, sit yourself next to Valerie. You," she said to me, "start pouring the wine. Don't slack about so!"

If I had any idea of doing anything about this shrill rebuke I was saved from the necessity of it by Uncle Freddie. With hands positively tottering and with the eagerness of a traveller at the end of some parching desert trek he was already pouring a large measure of wine for Mr. Benson and an even larger one for himself.

Mr. Benson, I noticed, was ominously flushed. His normally pallid face was wreathed in a tipsy pinkish cloud. Aunt Leonora's notions of taking him out of himself had succeeded so well indeed that he now seemed almost a stranger. His eyes had in them a moist groping glow and suddenly I saw him turn them on Peggy in a second of fleeting, helpless appeal. She for her part could do nothing but appeal as mutely in return.

In the smoky heat of that fishy, sombre midday Aunt Leonora suddenly gave a girlish shriek, said, "Ready!" brandished the sizzling frying pan and commanded all of us to sit down and fall to.

For one awful moment I thought Mr. Benson would fall. His legs seemed momentarily to totter under him. He ended by flopping heavily between Valerie and Peggy, most of his wine spilling on the way.

All the time that monstrous canopy of muddy fishiness hung over us. And soon the fish itself was on our plates, greenish, gluey, glassy with hot butter. Then as we began to toy with it, some of us with politeness, some not, and most of us under heavy cover of bread, Aunt Leonora suddenly glared across at me from behind her dancing gold spectacles and demanded to know, "Well, how does it strike you?"

In a low voice, from behind a hunk of bread, I simply said that it struck me.

"Eh? What was that?" Those charming big teeth of hers almost snapped at me. "Don't mutter. I've told you before."

"Oh, the fish?" I said. "Quite indescribable."

"What? How do you mean? Indescribable?"

"Just indescribable."

She gave me one of those dark searching glowers of hers, at the same time masticating with blatant richness on a lump of perch, and then said, "Well, I won't claim they have quite the finesse of those we had at Geneva—the waters are colder there anyway and that makes a difference—but I've had worse. I've had worse."

I was about to ask where, when she peremptorily accused Uncle Freddie of neglecting the wine.

"Mr. Benson's glass is empty, isn't it, Mr. Benson? Disgraceful. If any man's glass should be full it's Mr. Benson's. Fill the dear man to the brim."

Mr. Benson, who was in no position to know whether his glass was full or empty, gave a slight retching sound but otherwise made no reply. At the same time Uncle Freddie took an enormous swig of wine, gulped at some impossible lump of fish stuck in his throat, smacked his lips, and involuntarily belched aloud.

"Freddie!"

Peggy coughed weakly on a fishbone. I hadn't the heart to look at Valerie, nor she at me, but suddenly I felt the air to be full of desperation.

"Oh, look at the swans, Aunt! And five cygnets."

She turned sharply to look at the lake.

"Swans? What swans? Where? I don't see swans."

"Over there. No—not that way—farther up. By the island. You see the quince trees? Just beyond. You mustn't miss them—they look like a bit of ballet."

Her nature, as well as being that of a schemer, is also an intensely curious one and she abruptly got up and walked over to the lake.

In the interval of her being there I threw two buttery fillets over my shoulder, into a clump of cow parsley. Uncle Freddie solemnly wrapped two of his in a handkerchief. I saw Valerie slide one of hers under the tablecloth and for the second time within a few minutes drench her beautiful breast in perfume. She also winked at me and I, prompted by this, wrapped the remains of Peggy's perch in a paper napkin. In return she

had neither wink nor smile for me but instead was gazing at Mr. Benson with a kind of remote and pained compassion. There were almost tears in her eyes.

"What swans? You must be imagining things. I could see no swans."

"You were too late."

Before she could counter this Mr. Benson staggered slowly to his feet. "Would you mind," he said, "if I just went for a little walk?"

Flushed and tottering, he started to grope his way along the lakeside. He had scarcely gone twenty yards or so before Aunt Leonora, with that smile of divine triumph of hers, leaned over to Peggy, touched her lightly on the hand and said in a breath of almost secretive sweetness, "Go with him, dear. I think he needs your help."

As Peggy got up to go I could hear Mr. Benson being horribly sick by the lakeside. At the first ghastly groan of his pain she broke into a cry and started running, and for the rest of that sombre humid afternoon she sat under the shadow of a silver poplar, Mr. Benson's head in her lap, just occasionally shyly stroking his hair.

And occasionally also, as Aunt Leonora looked with fond solicitude on the two of them, Aunt Leonora would give that charming, innocent toothy smile of hers and say something like, "You think they're all right? They've had no food. You think we should take them a piece of pie? Perhaps not. Perhaps they're best left together. When two people are together like that I don't suppose they're interested in food. No, let's leave them. Perhaps they'll have a zizz. Then they can have pie when they wake up. I thought the crust was so good today."

This triumph of divine end-shaping was a long time ago. Mr. Benson and Peggy are married now and once a year, on their wedding anniversary, Aunt Leonora always gives them a little dinner party, to which I too am invited. Always we drink redcurrant wine and always, with that divine tactlessness of hers which so infuriates and fascinates, she serves one course of fish fried in butter, And always, halfway through this course, I look up first at Peggy and then at Mr. Benson and see on their two faces the same strange, lost, distant, groping look.

It is exactly as if they had never met each other before.

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THE ROPE

by ALLAN SEAGER

He'd never see daylight again—no more the excitement of trying to keep alive

IT was hardly a trial. They seemed to want to establish accurately who he was, that the man before them was he and no other, that was all. They knew what he had done, better than he did himself—for the last months had run fluidly together in his memory, and only a few things, irrelevancies, stood out. He was there to answer questions, they said, not to make any statements; not that he intended to, not that he had any statements to make. There was a sergeant who kept telling him to stand to attention, although it was only a captain who was questioning him. He had never seen any of them before, which was perhaps just as well. It would be hell to be condemned by your acquaintances.

They had commandeered the nunnery for a prison. What had become of the nuns? And they were using one of the medical rooms for the tribunal, the surgery perhaps. The captain sat at an enamelled table. There was a metal sink in the corner, and the comrade acting as stenographer sat on an adjustable enamelled stool with his pad on his knee. The place smelled faintly of formaldehyde, but he did not think they had selected it because he was to be cleansed of anything here. It was just chance.

Now that he was captured, the nervous tension of the last weeks began to loosen, and he was not able to fix his

attention on .the proceedings very clearly, although he knew he ought to. At last the captain said he would be held in solitary confinement until current investigations could be completed. This meant he had become a person of importance. They expected ransom or an exchange, otherwise they would have set a term; ten years, perhaps twenty-five. He straightened himself and stood looking over the captain's head. Any open contempt and he knew they would beat him up, casually, and that was pointless now. He had already begun to wait.

"One last thing, Foz," the captain said. "Try to commit suicide, and we'll shoot you."

"Sir," he said, still looking six inches above the other's head.

Before the two guards could lay a hand on him he walked towards the door, and they did not touch him all the way to his cell. The door was open, a plain oak door, but it had a chest-high opening in it with a hinged cover. It was freshly cut. The Reverend Mother would have had no reason to come spying on her nuns. They did not shove him in. They let him walk. The door shut, and he heard the bolt thrust to.

In the cell was a bed with an inch-thick pad on it, a rolled blanket, and a bucket in the corner. He lay down on the bed and pulled the blanket over him. He was exhausted, he discovered. Only two nights of the last thirty had he slept in a bed, the others in the open, often without cover. Without thinking further, he went to sleep at once.

He woke up. He got up off the bed to look out of the window. It had been about eleven in the morning when he had left the captain, and he wanted to see the light so he could estimate how long he had slept. He found that his window opened into a corridor, and craning his neck, he could not see any windows on the far side of it. He touched the stone wall. It was not cold.

He had known many who had been captured, a few who had come out again, some escaped, but not from this prison, one or two set free. They had told him it was important to know what day it was. Some sort of order had to be kept. You could not let yourself sink into the recesses of your mind.

Every bit of metal had been taken from him, and they had refused him even a weak string to use as a belt. He stood on one foot and tried to see the heel of his boot. He glanced up at the ceiling, but he realised he had already noticed

there was no electricity. He ran his finger carefully over the boot heel. There were two protuberances—nails. He moved the bed away from the wall and felt along the dim stone blocks. On the second one above the floor, the second one from the corner, he scratched the first number, a 2. Then he bent down. With his eyes close to it, he could make it out. He finished the date, 2/3/38. He would make one scratch after each two feedings.

The cell was six steps long, and he could not quite touch both walls if he spread his arms out wide. The door was solid. There was no use for further inspection. He had never been in this nunnery before. He had no plans to escape.

They had said—the former prisoners—it was necessary to establish a routine, to find certain things to do each day, and above all to occupy one's mind so as to glide into the future without thinking about it, to eat it up without tasting. Very well, he would be fed twice a day. As soon as the food had had time to digest, he would do the callisthenics he had learned in the sports club.

At once he saw himself on the soccer field, Luis with his knobby knees in front of him, bending as he himself was bending to touch his left toe with his right hand, and Carlos beside Luis bending also, a bright day. Luis had died in the Guadarrama, and Carlos had escaped to France after the first gunshots on the Rambla, the bastard. Never again would he be as lithe and full of hope as then.

He caught himself, seeing the danger. You must not think of the future because hope was bound to the future. The past was all you had, but you must not colour the past with feelings. You could act it over again in your head, but you must keep it pure. If you could not make a documentary movie out of your past—plain, uncut, uncoloured, black and white—with the emotion kept out of each frame of this odd film, you would find yourself, they had said, wallowing in anger at your own stupidity in being caught, or in fear that they might want some information they thought you had, and you might end with your eyelids cut off, like the fellow who got back to his unit before he went blind. Any or all of these led to pity for yourself, and that fried your brains.

He heard someone call, "Supper!" in the corridor and the banging of tin plates. In a few minutes he got his: beans and rice and a small stale piece of bread. He ate, cleaned his plate with the bread, ate that. He had slept only six

or seven hours, and he could feel himself getting ready to sleep again. The guard knocked and took the plate and spoon.

"What day is it?" he asked.

The guard merely grinned. It was this confusion of time they were counting on. They wanted him damaged, even dead. Why, then, hadn't they shot him at once, out of hand? It might be that there was a difference between the official policy, which set forth that he, a guerilla leader, was valuable for ransom or exchange, and the personnel who executed the policy, and who hated him because he might have shot up a brother or a cousin. He might have, at that.

It took him a week to get rested. He slept seventeen or eighteen hours a day and dozed the rest of the time except when he was doing his exercises or eating. During this time it was no problem to know what to do with himself.

Then one day, after pulling and stretching himself, he found that he was not sleepy. He was ready for that. He had decided to walk every place he had ever been. He began with his earliest memory, walking along the shore in the sand, but after a few hundred steps, six and turn, six and turn, his memories of his early boyhood overlapped those of his school days when he had run down the beach, leaping and throwing sand with a group of boys, and later, chasing girls down it. In the interest of efficiency he determined to walk twenty miles and let that stand for all his travel beside the great tideless sea.

"But why am I being efficient? I have plenty of time," he said to himself. "It is to prevent confusion; to keep off the bugbears of love and friendship." To walk the ten miles south from the harbour and back took him two days in his cell, and he walked barefoot to save his boots. He would need them later, for he did not suppose his family was still living to give him money for boots, and his friends would be dead or suspicious.

Abruptly on the tenth day his cell door opened and a lieutenant he had never seen came in with two guards. The break in the routine was almost like a holiday, and he had to guard himself, he realised suddenly, against being glad to see the strangers. The lieutenant had a flashlight. By its glow he inspected every block of stone and the mortar around it while the guards shook the blanket and worked every inch of the mattress through their fingers to find anything he might

have hidden. Then they made him strip, shook out his clothes, and turned out the pockets of his trousers. The lieutenant snapped off the flashlight and went out with the guards. They had spoken only once. If the lieutenant had seen his calendar on the wall, he had taken no formal notice of it.

He continued walking, at first to school, looking sternly at the remembered faces of his friends as if he had never seen them before, then the errands for his mother and grandfather, the street play, and the way to the soccer field, to the classrooms at the high school, the first surreptitious trip to the bullring to see Lalanda, and the night time strolls past the houses of girls. The train journey to Madrid and the few car rides he had taken gave him trouble—he couldn't recall the countryside well enough to walk through it plausibly, although he did walk up the shore road nearly to Port-Bou, a jaunt he had taken when he was seventeen.

Ten days later the lieutenant made his second inspection and left without speaking to him. He realised he would be inspected regularly, perhaps until he came to expect it at ten-day intervals, and then they might fool him. But he would be able to laugh at them afterwards, for he was doing nothing that required their searches.

He found that he would have to stop walking. It was the food—not enough of it. He could feel his ribs stand out under his shirt, and the day they took him to the bath, he looked his naked body up and down. The walking was taking too much energy.

He was ready for that also. He lay on his bed hour after hour playing over all the soccer games. When he had exhausted them, he reviewed the guerilla actions, beginning when he was a private when seven men would waylay a truck and shoot it up. If it exploded, they would not bother to go near it. If it did not, it meant that it contained food or sometimes clothing and medical supplies, and they would return loaded. Later, the trains, staying close in gullies or on ridges so they could get in the grenades, then retiring to wait for the emergency repair outfit and blowing that too. And when he was a lieutenant, the false roadblocks to learn passwords so they could fool the sentries at airfields or supply dumps, and the night attacks there. At first he tried to divert the satisfaction he had felt at his successes—he had been very good—but after a month of this, he gave up and said, "What harm can it do? It's all I have."

Perhaps it was this letting go of his emotion that led him to the girls. He had not known many, and he could recall in splendid clarity every moment, every shade of expression, every night he had spent with each. Sitting on the edge of his bed, thumping his fist into his hand, he wondered if he would ever again be clean-shaven, in fresh linen, with a girl who would be laughing beside him while they walked somewhere they could be alone. He pulled the bed away from the wall and counted the marks. He had been there four days over seven months. This had been time enough for a ransom or an exchange. Had all the attacks failed? Were they losing the war? Worse, had they forgotten all about him? He jumped up and began to beat on the door, shouting.

After a minute he heard the bolt shot back, and the door opened. It was the little fat guard who fed him every day. He had a Mauser pistol in his hand, and he was grinning his usual sly grin.

"How goes the war? Who is winning?" he shouted.

The guard motioned him back with his pistol.

"Have you bastards taken Madrid? Tell me!" he shouted.

Still grinning, the guard tapped his own ear and shook his head. The guard shut the door, bolted it, and went up the corridor scuffing his feet.

Why would they have a deaf guard? Were they so sure no-one would escape that they dared use a deaf man who could hear nothing? He would never see daylight again, no more fighting, no more girls, no more anything. He sat down on the bed, panting.

He noticed his own panting. Why should a little shouting make him pant? He was getting weak, going to pieces. This was what they wanted, of course. Another month, two months, and he would get sick. They would plead no medicines, and he would die in this dim, filthy hole.

He had to find something he could do. Thinking was no good.

It was getting to be cold weather, and there was no heat. He picked up his blanket and threw it around his shoulders. He looked at it for the first time. It was a good wool blanket, tightly woven, perhaps from the nuns. The ends had been left rough, unsewed, and a couple of threads were working themselves loose from the warp. Without paying any attention to it, he began to tease one small thread loose, thinking

all the while about what he could find to do, some action that might take his mind off his life, this cell, his future. He realised he had found it. Slowly, painstakingly, he worked on the little thread. He could barely see it, and he pushed it from the warp threads with his nails. At last he had it free.

He held it up dangling in front of him with a feeling of accomplishment, a few fibres of dirty wool twisted into a tiny thread. He laid it carefully on the floor where he could see it and began work on the other. At the end of the day, after his second feeding, he had the two loose threads free. The next day he would start work on the body of the blanket where the threads were tightly woven. For the first time since his arrest he looked forward to the coming of another day.

It was hard, close work. He learned all about the strength and springiness of wool fibres. In three days, he had seven threads lying side by side on the floor without having broken a one. He forgot to do his callisthenics. He sat hunched over the blanket until his muscles ached. When nine threads lay side by side on the floor, it occurred to him that the guard might possibly catch sight of them, and he spent a whole day twisting the threads into a cord—it kept coming apart, and he had to start over again many times. When it was finished, he tested it. It was quite strong.

The next day he heard voices in the corridor. It was time for the inspection. He shoved the cord under the mattress and pulled it out again at once. One of the first things they did was take up the mattress, and they would find it. His pockets were no good—they would find it there. He stood in the middle of his cell, shaking in panic. Just as they shot back the bolt, he stuffed the cord into his mouth. Coiled, it was not big. He was standing at attention when the lieutenant and the guards came in.

Now that he had found something he could give his whole attention to, he worked more slowly, even more carefully, as if he had a trade. He could hardly wait to finish his morning beans and rice to get to work again. He grew expert, and a thread worked loose seemed to be a reward, a milestone, but a reward for what, or a milestone along which road, he no longer considered. He was getting thinner, but he did not notice it, and sometimes, if he stood up suddenly to stretch, he blacked out, but it lasted only a second or two, and he accepted it as if it were part of his job.

He noticed his dreams, though. His nights became restless and horrible. At a slow gait, sometimes creeping, he crossed

hostile landscapes only to end these journeys doing quite simple things that were wrong, things to damn him for ever, he knew, yet familiar things on wiry grass, under inimical trees, watched by heavy knowledgeable stones and houses. Often he would wake up sweating and panting. Twice he found the cord around his neck, but he could not tell whether he had put it there or whether the guard had known about it all the time and had tiptoed into his cell and arranged it as a hint. But he laughed at that. If they knew about the cord, they were waiting for him to use it, but he was not going to.

The cord, twisted tightly, grew almost to the thickness of a pencil, and at the next inspection he again concealed it in his mouth, on his tongue with his teeth apart to make room, and his lips just closed over them.

After this inspection, it took him three days to realise that already the cord was getting too thick to hide another time.

He felt as if he had been hit a heavy blow with a club, and sank on his bed with the cord hanging across his knees.

He coiled up the rope and put it in his mouth. The work of the last three days had made it too big a mass for him to shut his lips over. He poked at it with his fingers, trying to arrange it, but it was useless. He could not close his lips. The lieutenant would notice. He would take it out of his mouth. They were such sticklers for form, they would have another trial. They would point out that a prisoner could have only one use for a rope. They would remind him that attempted suicides were punished by shooting. Fear grew over him like another skin.

He jumped up and looked out the window. If he threw the rope out into the corridor, they would find it. He knew already that no place in his cell would hide it. "There must be a simple way to hide it. There must be," he said aloud.

He paced the floor and did not feel his weakness.

That night he did not sleep. He still paced and turned, paced and turned, tears of chagrin running unfelt down his face for all the work he had lost.

"There must be a simple way. Am I going crazy or what? Some simple way." If he could have got at his brain to squeeze it, he would have done it.

At last he thought of it, the simple way. He sat down, took up the rope and began to untwist it. Before that evening's supper, he had one tiny thread worked free. He smoothed the blanket over his knees and began to weave the thread back into it.

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The time had come for a man-to-man talk

BRINGING UP *Harrison*

by RICHARD HAYDN

HEAVY precipitation in south-easterly areas was the Clerk of the Weather's prediction for today. Fortunately, during the night, a capricious north wind gave him the lie by putting to rout the lowering clouds and, at 10.02 a.m., when Harrison and I embarked on our outing, Gubbion Avenue was bathed in winter sunshine.

The boy wore his best suit, some new shoes and a freshly-blackened eye. The latter, Maude had explained while packing our luncheon (hard-boiled eggs and bloater-paste sandwiches), was the result of a strenuous game of Mothers and Fathers played, last night, with Ursula Monks.

Our departure had been delayed by Harrison's two visits to the bathroom, and, during his second absence, Maude had revealed a certain apprehension regarding the purpose of my forthcoming junket with the lad, viz., "a nice long talk." Her references to his tender years and his innocence, together with sundry other remarks, implied that the revelation of Life's facts, to one so hypersensitive, might induce shock unless divulged with the utmost delicacy. I did my best to reassure her but, when we kissed goodbye, she clung to me and, with tears in her eyes, begged me to be gentle with him.

As we walked to the bus stop, I reminded Harrison that his new shoes would last longer if he picked up his feet. He seemed not to hear this, and I made a covert inspection of my stepson-to-be. The sullen angle of his down-covered jaw (he is slightly undershot) made his sensitivity difficult to discern, and I wondered if Mother Love might possibly have had a warping effect on Maude's judgment of her offspring.

While we waited for the bus, I attempted to break through the boy's reserve by patting his shoulder with an air of *camaraderie*. There being no reaction to my gesture, I said, cheerfully, "Well, old chap, where would you like to go this fine day?"

Harrison's reply was immediate. "Home," he said.

My question having been purely rhetorical—I had decided on our destination a week ago—I ignored his churlishness and fell silent. Harrison then began a careful scrutiny of my feet which I found most disconcerting. Suddenly, he said, "Why do you wear those old galoshes when the sun's shining?" My benign reply that Prevention is better than Cure was rewarded with a snort of disgust, and he said, "Ursy Monks says you wear 'em in bed." I decided to treat this as childish humour and laughed with appropriate heartiness. Harrison regarded me pityingly. "Ursy Monks doesn't think it's funny—she thinks it's insanitary," he said. At this juncture the bus arrived and we embarked.

Choosing the ideal locale for our excursion had been no easy task. The atmosphere of immediate surroundings colours the moods of men (and children) far more than is generally suspected and, during my chilblain incarceration, I had given the matter deep thought. A setting conducive to Harrison's ready understanding of certain basic laws was essential—but where to find it?

Inspiration had come to me while conning the immortal works of William Wordsworth; two lines in the first stanza of *The Tables Turned* supplying me with the answer:

Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your Teacher.

This morning, therefore, when the bus conductor demanded our fares, I said, "Two to the Zoo."

I had hoped that Harrison, upon learning our destination would evince pleasure. Instead, he said loudly, "The Zoo smells."

For some reason his remark amused several of the other passengers and one of them, a gentle old lady, told him that all little boys should love animals. Harrison's expression changed immediately from disgruntlement to piety, and turning to her, he gave a wan smile. The lady gasped and said, "Why you poor child, where did you get that terrible eye?" Harrison thought for a moment. Then, leaning towards her, he whispered something. The nature of his communication can only be conjectured, but I found the balefully accusing

stare with which the old lady transfixed me for the remainder of the journey most embarrassing. The incident had a cheering effect upon Harrison however, and, by the time we reached the Zoo, he was in a comparatively tractable mood.

Upon entering the beautifully-appointed gardens, my charge insisted on an immediate inspection of the wart-hog. As we stood before its cage, I inquired the reason for his interest in so repulsive a beast. Harrison filled his mouth with peanuts I had purchased for squirrels and said, "Ursy Monks says her Aunty Win looks just like a wart-hog."

"Poor lady," I murmured sympathetically.

"She's not poor," replied Harrison. "Ursy Monks says she's had five husbands . . . all millionaires."

"Your little friend's aunt probably has a beautiful nature," I said, at last.

"Ursy Monks says she's a horrible old cow," the boy replied casually, and after hitting the wart-hog on the snout with a peanut shell, he strolled over to another exhibit.

Words cannot describe the shock I received from hearing those young lips utter so vulgar a phrase. At any other time I should have reprimanded the boy immediately. To have done so today, however, would have jeopardised the *rapprochement* which I had sensed burgeoning between us during our discussion of Miss Monks' Aunt Winifred. Harmonious comradeship was essential to the success of my project. Therefore, when Harrison called me over to look at the *Choiropotamus porcus*—or Cameroon Painted Pig—I controlled myself and made no reference to his deplorable simile.

The call of Nature necessitated Harrison's leaving the Wild Swine Enclosure and, while I waited before the cage of a White Lipped Peccary for him to return, I planned the next manœuvre in my campaign for his enlightenment. It required inveigling him into the Bird House. Once there, I fondly hoped that the dainty, but peculiar, habits of some of our feathered friends would excite his interest sufficiently to warrant my introducing weightier discourse.

Twenty minutes elapsed before Harrison rejoined me, during which—with the aid of a bloater-paste sandwich—I became friendly with several sparrows. The boy's return and his petulant wail of, "You're giving my dinner away," scared a small hen-bird from my left forefinger, and caused a wave of anger to surge through me. My self-control was immediately engulfed and I do not think Maude herself could have stopped the scathing homily on Greed and Selfishness with which I upbraided her son.

When, finally, lack of breath brought my harangue to a halt, the boy raised his downcast eyes to mine. Instead of the sullen resentment which I had expected to see in them, there was a look so closely akin to respect that I had great difficulty concealing my amazement. In a meek voice, he said, "I'm sorry, Uncle Ed. I didn't mean it." There was a pause and I patted his shoulder. We smiled at each other and I sensed the birth of a new and better understanding.

I wonder if, at last, I have discovered the correct method of handling my stepson-to-be?

The one small detail which prevents me from being entirely convinced is that, directly after this episode, Harrison insisted on taking charge of our luncheon bag.

We headed for the Aviaries, but *en route* the Reptile House proved an irresistible lure to my charge and I spent an unpleasant forty-five minutes in its fetid atmosphere, while he watched a Boa Constrictor crush and engorge a small rabbit. My attempts to pry him away from this gruesome spectacle were fruitless and not until the mammoth snake, distended and surfeited, collapsed into a coma would he consent to leave. Never have I seen him merrier.

At Penguin Pool, the quaint, flightless seabirds were entertaining a large crowd with their almost human antics. One pair of Adelie Penguine (*Pygoceles adeliae*) were indulging in the strange dance of courtship and I directed Harrison's attention thereto. The male, after executing various odd figures, would pick up a pebble with his bill and present it to his prospective mate with great ceremony. It was a charming sight. The clumsy courtliness of the bird's behaviour—enhanced by the formal black and white of his plumage—evoked much laughter, but the little creature gave no heed to his human audience and continued his cavortings. Apparently penguins are unlike dogs, who hate being laughed at.

We continued to watch and, after the birds had performed a particularly intimate *pas de deux*, Harrison tugged at my sleeve. I turned to him, bracing myself for the leading question which I felt certain he was about to ask. Instead, he said, "I'll be back in a minute, Uncle Ed."

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"You know," he answered.

"But you just went," I said, impatiently.

"No I didn't—I couldn't find it," the boy replied and walked rapidly away.

As I watched Harrison disappear, I pondered the prudence of having Doctor Triggs give him a thorough examination and, in my pocket memorandum, made a note to discuss the matter with Maude . . .

After inspecting the Grebes, two Crested Screamers—who resented my new umbrella—and a repulsive African Shoebill, I came to rest before a solitary Argus Pheasant. From a friendly Zoo attendant, I learned that the male of this handsome species will only court the female if she remains absolutely stationary. Should she be restive, he will display before some other, motionless object. The man explained that

this particular bird had lost his wife last spring (she had become egg-bound) and, since her demise, the bird had been displaying before his water-trough.

I found the story touching and stood in contemplation of the lonely creature for quite a while. Suddenly the Argus Pheasant strutted as close to me as the wire netting would permit and, after giving me a searching look, proceeded to display his spectacular plumage in the most flattering manner. The attendant laughed and asked if I was a good "egg-layer." In order to hide my embarrassment, I looked at my watch and was disturbed to discover that an hour had elapsed since Harrison's departure. After wishing the man good day, I hurried off to find the boy.

For thirty minutes I searched, with mounting alarm, in the Lion House, Small Mammal House, Beaver Pond, Bear Pit and four structures marked *Gentlemen*. There was no trace of my errant charge and, somewhat distraught, I made my way to the Lost and Found Department. The elderly gentleman in attendance, on seeing my breathless condition, offered me a chair and listened to my description of Harrison with a look of kindly wisdom. When I had finished he said, with an Irish accent, "How old's the lad?" I told him. He thought for a moment and then smiled.

"Did you try Monkey Hill?" he asked. I confessed that I had not.

"That's the first place to look for a boy of his age. If the young rapscallion isn't there, let me know," he said, and winked knowingly. The implication in his look disconcerted me. I dissembled and, after thanking him, sped on my way.

The first intimation that I was on Harrison's track came in the form of a fragment of hard-boiled egg which struck my cheek as I passed the cage of a Chimpanzee named *Mildred*. My suspicion that it was part of our luncheon was confirmed when, in the adjoining cage, I espied an Orang-utan waving several bloater-paste sandwiches and eating a mutilated paper bag. A few moments later—true to the Irish gentlemen's prediction—I saw Harrison lolling over the railing which surrounded Monkey Hill. He was watching, with open-mouthed fascination, the indecorous behaviour of a horde of Rhesus Monkeys (*Macaca mulata*). From a distance I watched the boy. After perhaps three minutes, the uninhibited antics of a small, male Rhesus made the distraction of my charge's attention imperative and I called his name.

Seeing me, Harrison grabbed my arm and said joyfully, "Uncle Ed, you should have been here. These are the best. You should see the things they do."

I was relieved to see that his delight was completely unself-conscious and decided that to scold him for his disappearance, at this time, would be inadvisable. Instead I said, "Where is our luncheon?"

The boy hung his head and, after a lengthy pause said, "I ... I gave it to some monkeys."

"Look at me, Harrison," I said quietly. Reluctantly, he did so and I continued, "Are you sure you *gave* it to the monkeys?"

His eyes searched mine, shifted uneasily and then looked down at his new shoes. I waited. After swallowing twice, he blurted out, "No, Uncle Ed, I didn't give it to them—" He pointed to the Primate House—"that ugly old red one in there grabbed it out of my hand." His voice broke during the confession and, as I looked down at the dejected figure, I experienced a sudden, inexplicable and quite surprising feeling of pride and affection for my future stepson. Tentatively, I placed my arm about his shoulders and, sensing no resistance, drew him close to my side. He looked up at me and we smiled at each other. It was a repetition of the moment we had had in the Wild Swine Enclosure, but I sensed a deeper sincerity in the boy which gave me great pleasure.

His eyes are the same colour as Maude's.

"Never mind the sandwiches, son," I said. "We'll have something to eat in the restaurant."

As we turned to leave, Harrison drew my attention to a female Rhesus who was suckling a minute baby. "Look, Uncle Ed, it's like a real mother."

"But *she is a real mother*," I said.

"I mean a grown-up woman mother," the boy replied. In order to avoid the frankness of his gaze, I looked at my watch. It was 1.33 p.m.

On our way to the Restaurant, we paused to look at the Indian Elephants. Harrison seemed greatly impressed by the size of the giant pachyderms. Suddenly, he said, "Uncle Ed, *d'you know how long it takes an elephant to have a baby?*" Before I could phrase a fitting reply, he said, "Eighteen months. Twice as long as a woman. Ursy Monks says so."

Keeping my eyes straight ahead, I said, "Really," and we recommenced walking.

Harrison's expansive mood continued and we had gone but a short distance when he said, "Ursy Monks says she's going to have twelve babies by the time she's twenty-six."

Moisture began to bedew my brow, but in spite of it and the sudden tightness of my collar, I succeeded in keeping the tone of my reply purely conversational.

"What makes her think she can have so many children in so short a time?" I asked.

"She's got it all worked out. She told me how it's done," replied Harrison.

"Indeed," I said, non-committally.

"Yes. We're going to get married when she's seventeen and then one baby every nine months. That'll take us nine years. So she'll be twenty-six by the time she's finished."

"It sounds very simple," I murmured and stopped to look at a Bactrian Camel.

"It's not true about them living without water," said Harrison. "Ursy Monk's Aunty Win proved it."

"How?" I asked.

"She didn't give hers any water and it died of thirst in four days," the boy replied.

We were fortunate enough to get a table on the terrace outside the Restaurant and, although I had no appetite, Harrison won the approval of the waitress by ordering grapefruit, sausage and mashed potatoes, a double banana split and lemonade. While we waited the food's arrival, I noticed him looking at me curiously. All at once he said, "Have you ever been married, Uncle Ed?"

"Not so far," I answered cautiously.

"Nor has Mr. Murke, has he?"

"Not to my knowledge," I said.

Harrison gave a sigh of depression. "Then why do *I* have to?" he asked.

"If you are going to have twelve children, it might be advisable," I said gently.

Harrison sighed again. "That's what Ursy Monks says," he said and lapsed into a frowning silence.

For a moment I watched the troubled young face. "Do you think she will make you a good wife?" I asked.

To my surprise, Harrison said, fiercely, "That old Ursy Monks . . . I hate her!" He then kicked the table leg twice, with great force.

"Then why are you going to marry her?" I asked.

He looked at me with tragic eyes. "I've got to," he said.

My umbrella fell to the ground with a great clatter and, as I bent to retrieve it, I wiped my forehead surreptitiously with my serviette.

"Why have you . . . *got to*?" I said.

"She says she'll hit me if I don't," the boy replied and, picking up a highly polished tablespoon, he began an examination of his blackened eye.

By the time Harrison's food arrived, I discovered that my appetite had returned. I ordered a portion of pork pie and a pot of tea. The pie, although tasty, was by no means as succulent as that which I had enjoyed at The Great Western Railway Station, but in spite of this I left but a few crumbs.

While we were waiting to board the bus for home, Harrison made one more reference to the marital problems which he seems convinced he will have to face in a few years. As we watched the traffic flash by, he said cheerfully, "Uncle Ed, p'raps Ursy Monks'll get run over before she's seventeen."

During tea at The Nest, Maude avoided my eyes while Harrison was present. This, and her over-vivacious reaction to the boy's description of the various animals was, I sensed, due to her anxiety to know the result of our excursion. Harrison, I was relieved to note, made no reference to the Rhesus Monkeys and, after a hearty meal—which included four portions of his mother's latest fruit cake (another soggy failure)—he departed to play in the garden.

Maude and I sat in silence for several minutes. Then, placing her hand gently in mine, she looked into my eyes and said, tremulously, "Well?"

I pressed her hand and smiled reassuringly. "He knows," I said.

Maude looked down at a raisin on her plate and her fingers tightened in mine. "How much?" she asked, softly.

I cleared my throat. "Enough," I answered . . .

It was a wonderful evening and, after cocoa, as I held Maude in my arms, she whispered, "Thank you, my dear, for what you have done today for my . . . our boy."

I was deeply moved by her speech. I think she was too, for our goodnight kiss was of longer duration than usual and the looks we exchanged when I took my leave made words unnecessary.

As I walked home, I marvelled at the feeling of strength which I derive from my dear one's faith in me.

It has just occurred to me that I omitted to discuss Harrison's kidneys.

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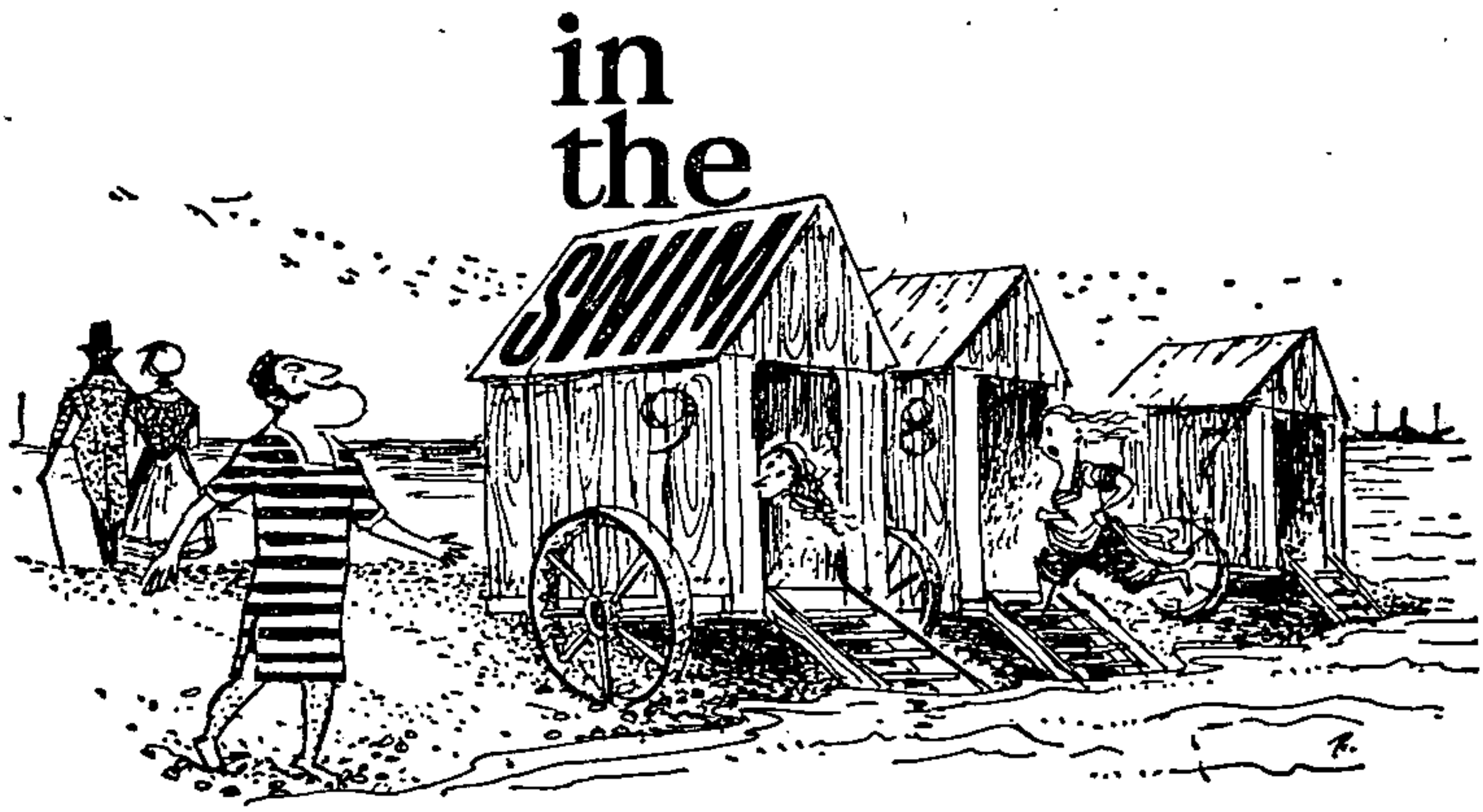

At Weymouth. The King (George III) bathes and with great success; a machine follows the Royal one into the sea, filled with fiddlers who play "God save the King" as His Majesty takes his plunge.

FANNY BURNEY, 1789

Unsporting Behaviour

After one had entered the bathing-machine and closed the door, a man would ride up on a horse and attach it to the machine by two ropes with hooks at the ends. Then he would gaily trot the structure into the sea. Sometimes the shore was very uneven and one had to hang on for all one was worth; sometimes the waves would bang against the floor, often wetting one's clothes if the planks were at all defective. Then one heard the man unfasten the ropes, and was left to the mercy of the swirling sea. Augusta had always hoped that they had not been taken *very* far in. She had felt she could be brave, if the water did not come above her knees.

The ladies' machines differed from the men's. A huge hood was let down seawards from each machine so that no naughty man would be able to see the women and girls as they disported themselves in the water. It would have been a difficult matter for them to see anything, even if there had not been the canvas hood, for all the women wore long serge bathing gowns which reached to the ankles. They had long sleeves, and were tied round the waist.

T. H. WHITE, *Farewell Victoria*

Cool Cats

As I was troubled with fits, she advised me to bathe in the loff, which was holy water; and so I went in the morning to a private place along with the housemaid, and we bathed in our birth-day soot, after the fashion of the country; and behold, whilst we dabbled in the loff, Sir George Coon started up with a gun; but we clapt our hands to our faces, and passed by him to the place where we had left our smocks—a civil gentleman would have turned his head another way. My comfit is, he new not which was which, and, as the saying is, *All cats in the dark are grey.*

TOBIAS SMOLLETT, *Humphry Clinker*, 1771

The Deep End

No-one enjoys more than I do
The pleasures of the swimming-pool, or Lido
When I lie on the concrete bordering this municipal moisture
The world is my oisture.
I do not talk, or read novels of detection,
No, what deep water produces in me is deep reflection . . .
Surrounded by laughing bathers, I am as old as Tiresias or
Gerontius
I swim through a green and chlorinated Unconscious,
I love all men—
but what is this?
Two golden men and a golden miss
Seem to think they're admired by all
For their solemn game with a medicine ball;
They stand in poses we all have seen
On the covers of many a health magazine,
It's clear they think, from their graces and airs,
We wish we could all have bodies like theirs.
Sooner or later they drop their catches,
The wet ball lands on my pipe and matches;
My dreams no longer hatch out from their eggs
When gymnasts trip on my outstretched legs.
The view I take of their sport is dim,
I crossly rise and dive for a swim—
But here again I am far from solo,
I come up for air in a game of polo . . .
Too late! too late! I was just a fool
To think I could dream at a swimming-pool.

PAUL JENNINGS

Lock-knit Monster

Amid much cheering Mother removed her housecoat and stood revealed in all her glory, clad in the bathing-costume which made her look, as Larry pointed out, like a sort of marine Albert Memorial. Roger behaved very well until he saw Mother wade into the shallow water in a slow and dignified manner. He then got terribly excited. He seemed to be under the impression that the bathing-costume was some sort of sea monster that had enveloped Mother and was now about to carry her out to sea. Barking wildly, he flung himself to the rescue, grabbed one of the frills dangling so plentifully round the edge of the costume and tugged with all his strength in order to pull Mother back to safety.

Mother, who had just remarked that she thought the water a little cold, suddenly found herself being pulled backwards.

With a squeak of dismay she lost her footing and sat down in two feet of water, while Roger tugged so hard that a large section of the frill gave way. Elated by the fact that the enemy appeared to be disintegrating, Roger, growling encouragement to Mother, set to work to remove the rest of the offending monster from her person. We writhed on the sand, helpless with laughter . . .

GERALD DURRELL,
My Family and Other Animals

Enough!

Uncertain on the brink I stand
Like ice, and turn my wistful eyes
Backward, where in the sunlight lies
The safe and comfortable land.

No more; from out the swirling foam,
The moaning of the mighty main,
The deep that beckons me in vain,
A warmer prospect calls me home.

I dress; beside the distant sea
I hear a voice cry "All is well,"
And know that somewhere in The Bell
The coffee steams, and waits for me.

G. H. VALLINS,
Alfred Tennyson Rashly Contemplates A Morning Dip

It was only half the walk to town nowadays because the town was coming out to meet you

AMMO COLLECTOR

by DAVID PROCKTER

GINGERLY he raised his head above the tuft of grass, his eyes narrowed to slits against the Arizona sun, grim in the deep shadow of his white sombrero. It was quiet now, almost drowsy, with only the buzzard wheeling overhead and the distant, mournful call of a coyote out on the range.

His pony, pure white and the fastest in the West, was over the hill, patiently awaiting his whistle. He had silently dispatched the lookout with his bowie knife and now he was within a lariat's throw of the cabin.

Somehow he must learn its secret and slip away unseen to the Sheriff's office, back in town.

He made a dart for the cover of an outbuilding and fell again on to his stomach, recovering his breath and watching the door through the prongs of an old farm rake.

"Got you, boy!"

A sudden hand lifted the boy by the belt and carried him bodily across the yard, shocked from his daydream and transfixed like a terrified rabbit. His breathing was paralysed and all the animation in his body was painfully compressed into the frantic beating of his heart.

The cabin was dark inside, and cold, and smelled of cats. Against the wall was a music machine, as big as a Dutch dresser, ornate and heavy, with a pile of tarnished metal discs labelled *Kathleen Mavourneen, The Volunteer Organist, Two Little Girls in Blue.*

Daring, black pictures of Edwardian belles hung on the walls, grimy, unframed and curling. Under the window a heap of red, cardboard cartridge cases, the bottom ones fading

to yellow, stood as high as the sill and tumbled out almost to the middle of the room.

The old man swung him down and forced him against the wall, twiggy fingers round his throat, pressing up under his chin. The whiskers were very close, each dirty hair distinguishable, as he tried to turn his face out of the stream of breath.

"Got you, boy. So they're sending boys now, are they? Well, you tell 'em there'll be no developing here. Not while I'm alive, there won't. And that'll be a few years yet. You tell 'em that. There'll be no developing here."

The old man dropped his hand suddenly and shuffled away towards the rusty range.

The boy stood.

"Well go on, then! You go and tell 'em."

The boy moved apprehensively to the door.

"Boy!"

He grabbed the boy's arm viciously and the boy started, his white cowboy hat falling to the floor.

"You come back here agin and I'll put you in that pot."

He swung him round.

"See that pot? You come back here and I'll put you in that pot and eat you. Well, go on then."

The boy paused for half a heartbeat, then grabbed up his hat and fled.

Out in the clean sunlight he shot through a gap between the barbed wire and an old bedstead, waded frantically through the long grass, his legs tiring but never slowing, then along the narrow, cliff-top path and down to the village, and tea, and safety.

The old man came to the door and watched him go.

It was quiet now, almost drowsy, with only the sparrowhawk wheeling overhead and the distant, mournful call of a gull out on the rocks.

It was quiet now, out here, away from the village; and secure, as it had been since the last war. As it had been before that, after his own war, when he came back with a blighty one and grateful for it, because he had known he had shell shock long before, but they would not have believed him and would have thought him yellow.

So he was grateful for the blighty one, because it took him where it was quiet and secure, and gave him a disability pension.

The other war had spoilt it.

Not that it was a real war. It was fought with little flags on a map on the wall of the village post office, where he drew the pension.

And it was fought by young boys up here on the cliffs, in khaki, firing guns at a bit of cloth pulled behind an airplane. He used to run up to the wire and shout at them, because it was a thing he didn't like, firing guns.

They would laugh. Some of them would give him chocolate, but they would laugh, and he would run to the machine and put on *Kathleen Mavourneen* and nestle against it where it was loud.

But that was all over now, and up here it was quiet once again.

And it would stay quiet while he was alive. There would be no developing. They wanted to develop. They hadn't said anything but he knew they wanted to because they were developing mad.

He had seen it in the town. It was only half the walk to the town nowadays because the town was coming out to meet you. The guts were torn out of the pasture and it was covered over with concrete, white and rough and thick, laid like a field dressing over the wound.

Then they built little houses on top, breathing in each other's faces. They were clean now, but in time they would get like the houses he had seen from troop trains—dirty with town dirt and one outside closet between umpteen. You gave more room to animals.

But he wouldn't live like that. He would stay here in the quiet and collect ammo. He was an ammo collector. When they came shooting rabbits he watched them from the window, and after they'd gone he would slip out and pick up all the ammo.

If you didn't go straightaway the boys would get it, but he had built up a fine ammo collection over the years and it was not going to be ruined by developing.

Fridays he would get his pension and buy bread and tea and a few things. And he would go into The Bull and have draught cider.

Frank at The Bull was his friend. They didn't talk, but Frank had never put the price up. He mustn't tell anyone or they'd all want it cheap, and it had gone up double, treble, more.

Not that he could tell anyone because he never spoke to

them. He knew they talked about him and laughed, especially when there were strangers.

The children were scared of him. It kept them away—except that young shaver. Anyway, he wouldn't come back. He'd scared him all right.

He shuffled into the cabin and put on his coat. After carefully securing the door with a heavy padlock, he made his way to the village, picking up a couple of cartridge cases and rejecting one that had been too long in the weather and was spoilt.

When he returned it was dark. The moon was small and only the stars gave any light. But his eyes soon adjusted themselves, and he knew the way like the back of his hand, knew every landmark, independently of the poorly-defined path.

The way up to the cliff top became a river when it rained, so it was straight, except at one point, where a piece of rock jutted across it and you could hurt your ankle if you were not ready for it.

He negotiated it safely.

On the top, his eyes watering in the wind, he peered ahead for the white stone. It was round and the size of a man's head. He had put it there himself, a part of his secure, private world, to mark the inlet.

The inlet was a sheer-sided crack across the line of the cliff-top path, that plunged two hundred feet to the wet rocks and the breakers, forcing the path, such as it was, to jink inland.

Although the crack was narrow, it was still plenty wide enough to fall into, so he had placed the stone like an inland lighthouse, at the end farthest from the sea, to guide him safely round it.

There was the stone now. It told him that he must already be farther inland than he had thought. He fixed it with his eyes and made straight towards it, as if drawn hypnotically, unaware of the blackness of the night and the wind whistling across his lips as he unconsciously shaped them to *Kathleen Mavourneen.*

Suddenly the inlet was upon him. Suddenly he was over the edge, falling; a dead, useless weight, like the stones that clattered downwards with him.

He had been cheated. He had walked out of the down, down, down world of noise and shell shock and guns firing—

and developing. He had built his own quiet world, placed his own white stone, secure and private. But now it had not led him safely round the inlet; it had beckoned him straight across from the opposite side. It had moved. It had betrayed him. He was done.

The rocks hit him hard and mercifully...

Next morning the boy crept on to the cliff top, wriggling through the grass, sitting up on his haunches, like a rabbit, to peer around; wriggling again.

Spotting what he was after, he jumped to his feet. He threw caution to the wind and dashed to where it lay, where he had dropped it in yesterday's panic, his cowboy hat, round and white and clearly visible in the grass.

He grabbed it up and fled to the village, leaving only the drowsy morning quiet, and the sparrowhawk wheeling above, and the distant, mournful call of a gull out on the rocks.

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OGDEN NASH

Come live with me and be my love
And we will all the pleasures prove
Of a marriage conducted with economy
In the Twentieth Century Anno Donomy
We'll live in a dear little walk-up flat
With practically room to swing a cat
And a potted cactus to give it hauteur
And a bathtub equipped with dark brown water
We'll eat, without undue discouragement
Foods low in cost but high in nouragement
And quaff with pleasure, while chatting wittily,
The peculiar wine of Little Italy.
We'll remind each other it's smart to be thrifty
And buy our clothes for something-fifty.
We'll stand in line on holidays
For seats at unpopular matinees,
And every Sunday we'll have a lark
And take a walk in Central Park.
And one of these days not too remote
I'll probably up and cut your throat.

100

GRANDFATHER and the wondrous BEAST

IF anyone's to blame for what happened at Glenfoyle, I frankly haven't the foggiest notion where to point the finger. I mean to say, what actually took place wasn't what anyone expected—not even Burying Bessie. Poor Bessie had a different thing in mind altogether.

It began on a Sunday morning just after I'd had breakfast and gone into the garden to look at the parsnips. People insist you can't grow proper parsnips in the tropics, but they're daft. Or perhaps Jamaica isn't the true tropics. Anyway, I do it all the time—huge, fat, golden ones too. I was scraping the dirt away from some roots to judge their size when suddenly a voice said from the path behind me, "Good morning to you, Mr. Kenneth, sir. Me did come to sell you the mule."

"I don't want your mule now, Watches," I replied without turning my head. "I did, but I've acquired certain troubles since I told you so, thank you very much." Which was certainly no lie, with Grandfather having lost our best ten acres to old Braithwick on a silly wager and Constance Clark refusing even to grant me the time of day.

"Mr. Kenneth," the voice persisted, "me will sell Marybelle now for thirty pounds, including saddle and bridle. At that price her is a real bargain."

"Go away," I told him. "I'm not in a mood for joking."

"Me don't joke, Mr. Ken. Me need the money to go to England."

At that I stood up and faced him, because they will do

by HUGH B. CAVE

practically anything to get to England, these Jamaican country fellows. Heaven knows why they're so eager to give up their life of ease under a tropic sun for the factories and filthy weather of a land across the sea, but they are. And I did admire that mule.

He was sitting on the mule now, having ridden her up from the village, and it was something to see. Not Watches—he was his usual untidy self—barefoot, in tattered trousers and ghastly pink sports shirt. But Marybelle fairly glistened.

In the mountains of Jamaica, mules range in hue from dirty white to asphalt black; in size from donkey to draught horse; in temperament from docile to downright dangerous. Marybelle was on the small side, almost dainty, gentle as a kitten. And when clean, she was the colour of a gold coin fresh from the mint. This morning she was so clean she hurt my eyes. Even her saddle and bridle leather glistened.

"When are you going to England, Watches?" I asked. His name was not really that; it was Wilbur Ferguson. Everyone called him Watches, though. I haven't any idea why, any more than I know why Theophilus Daniels should always be called Pilcher or Stanley Henderson is known as Duppyman.

"As soon as me get the fare money, sir. You will buy the mule?"

I gave the matter some thought. Constance Clark had been wanting a good riding mule; her own had developed a lameness that defied the vet. Whether she had found one yet, I didn't know because, as I've said, she had stopped speaking to me. But I did know she had a birthday coming.

"Very well, Watches," I said. "For thirty pounds I'll buy."

Marybelle was worth fifty easily, but I could not afford to be generous—not after Grandfather's wager. And if I didn't buy the animal, the lad would only go and sell her to someone else for less. When they get the England bug, there's just no stopping them.

He took the money, signed a receipt and departed. Pleased with myself, I mounted my new acquisition and rode up to the big meadow which Grandfather had just lost to old Braithwick.

You would have to see our meadow to appreciate it. The Blue Mountains of Jamaica are very nearly vertical; flat land is all but non-existent. Our lovely meadow, ten acres in extent, was close to the road, with mountains for a backdrop and a breathtaking view of the coastal lowlands and the sea. In my head and partly on paper were plans for a trim little cottage I had planned to build there for Constance and me—a necessary prelude to my asking her to marry me. She couldn't be expected to live with Grandfather.

Now the meadow was gone. Grandfather last week had made this ridiculous wager with Braithwick—would it rain or wouldn't it?—and Braithwick had won. I was not surprised to see the old curmudgeon's car come up the road as I turned Marybelle towards the gate. He'd come to gloat.

Leaving his car at the gate, he walked in to tell me I was trespassing. Trespassing—when the meadow hadn't even been surveyed yet for the subdivision and transfer of title! He grinned when he used the word, however; he was a great one for grinning. He was a little man, a parish politician, only two or three years younger than Grandfather but full of bounce.

"That's a nice mule you've got there, Kenneth," he said, eyeing Marybelle with the acquisitiveness with which he eyed everything of value. "She for sale?"

"She is not, Mr. Braithwick," I said.

"Expect she will be some day. When she is, you let me know. I'm taken by her colour." With that he reached out

to pat Marybelle's glossy neck. She turned her head, quick as a wink of golden lightning and if he hadn't pulled his hand away even quicker, she would have clamped her teeth on his wrist.

"Humph!" said Braithwick. "Needs to be taught manners, she does."

"I find her manners above reproach, Mr. Braithwick," I retorted. "Good day to you, sir." And I rode off.

In a day or so, I was congratulating myself on having purchased one of the most affectionate and intelligent mules likely to be found in the entire island. There was but one small fly in the ointment, so to speak. Miss Bessie Crowder, mother of Watches Ferguson, was not pleased with my buying the animal.

Miss Bessie walked up from the village one evening just after supper to enter her protest. She was an odd woman. We employed her at times to pick coffee—Glenfoyle is a coffee estate—but she was not a reliable sort at all. "Me can't work tomorrow," she would often say. "We have affairs of self to attend to."

According to Grandfather, she was an obeah woman and had been for years. Her "affairs of self" were undoubtedly the making of charms and such for gullible villagers. Witchcraft is outlawed in Jamaica, of course, but our village is deep in the mountains and the law is not always alert.

"Burying Bessie," she was called. She attended every wake for miles around, the way more cheerful souls seek out weddings. There hadn't been a grave dug in twenty years, said Grandfather, that Bessie hadn't stood beside as its occupant was tucked to rest. Her black eyes flashed and her voice shrilled when she faced me on the veranda that evening: "You've no right to buy my son's mule, Mr. Kenneth!" said she.

"Haven't I, Bessie? Why not?"

"You've made it possible for he to go to England. Who will look after things in my old age if him go to England!"

"My dear Bessie," said Grandfather, "you've no need for anyone to look after your affairs. You're a paragon of capability."

"What?" shouted Bessie, bristling like a twig broom. "Me what, Mr. Mowbray, sir?"

"A tower of strength and independence," Grandfather amended. "Be off with you now. The lad asked thirty

pounds for his mule and got it without a quibble and you'll not get a bob more."

"It's not more me want," Bessie argued. "It's my son not going to England! Mr. Kenneth, me asking you to return the mule and get your money back from he."

I could only shake my head. There was no point in telling her why I had to have Marybelle. To put an end to the discussion, I led her to the veranda steps. There she whirled to face me again.

"You won't?" she demanded.

"If I return the animal, your boy will only sell it to someone else, Bessie. You can't stop him from going to England."

"Me can't?" said Bessie in a fury. "Oh, oh, you think me can't? Well, sir, you just wait and see!"

"Whoosh!" I said, when she'd gone. "What a woman! I believe I'd sooner tangle with an atom bomb."

"Don't speak to me of atom bombs," Grandfather muttered. "It's those confounded things that cost me the meadow."

"I beg your pardon?"

"The meadow—and don't look as though you think me daft. When I bet that old buzzard it would rain before morning, it should have rained. Sky, wind and my aching bones all said it had to. Those blasted bombs are what's turned the weather upside-down!"

Grandfather at eighty-seven is still six foot six and straight as a flagstaff—a terrifying figure when roused. You don't argue with him. At least I don't. An aunt in Scotland shipped me out to him when mother died—my father had passed on earlier—and as a consequence I've been learning to live with him since I was nine.

I rode Marybelle down the road to Bottom Bottle the next afternoon. That's the Clark place, and you needn't smile. We cherish the old names in our part of Jamaica. As it happened, Constance was not at home. Her mother, in slacks and a khaki shirt, was cutting back the poinsettia hedge in the front of the cottage.

"Hello," I said. "Has Connie got her new mule yet?"

"Not yet," said she.

"Good. I've brought her one—a bit of a birthday gift. Where is she by the way?"

"Gone to the bay," Mrs. Clark said, discarding her pruning shears to look Marybelle over. You couldn't fool her on mules. She was London-born, true enough, but had been at Bottom Bottle thirty years, running the place alone since the

death of her husband. She knew all there was to know about country living in the tropics.

"This is a fine-looking animal, Kenneth," she said. "Are you sure you want Connie to have her?"

"Of course I'm sure."

"Connie's not very pleased with you, you know." Sadly, she shook her head at me. "Why ever did you let her down about that school affair?"

I couldn't answer that. The event she referred to was the dedication of a new high school in the district and we'd all been invited to attend the ceremonies. You know the sort of thing. The new headmaster makes a speech, a dozen persons of prominence make speeches, everyone's asked to contribute to the book fund, the ladies on the committee serve tea and it's all in the paper next day, with pictures. I'd promised to take Connie but hadn't been able to, for the good and simple reason that Grandfather had got himself stoned and couldn't be left alone.

Mrs. Clark was fond enough of Grandfather, but worried a good deal about his drinking. In fact, I'd had a bit of a time convincing her that any kin of his would make a suitable husband for her daughter. I just couldn't admit that he'd got himself in such a condition again.

"Very well, keep your secret," she said, frowning, "but don't expect Connie to swoon in your arms until you've given her an explanation, my lad. She won't."

"I'll leave the mule," I said, "and hope for the best."

"How will you get home?"

"Walk."

"I could drive you," she offered.

I shook my head and tramped off deep in gloom. What the devil could I tell Connie about the school affair? She was far too smart to be taken in by any clumsy lie.

On reaching the road, I heard a car coming and halted. It might give me a lift, I thought—even the mail van was better than a mile walk. Foolish thought! The car was Connie's little yellow sportster with Connie herself, all smiles, at the wheel. It swerved into the Bottom Bottle drive in a swirl of dust.

On the seat beside Connie was the new headmaster, Jeremy Woodleigh, looking as though he'd swallowed the canary and found it delicious. Neither of them had even noticed me.

I didn't see Connie that week at all. She sent a polite little note through the post thanking me for Marybelle, but it

contained no invitation for me to come by and be thanked in person.

Grandfather said I was a fool. "A fine mule like that and you give it to a woman!" he snorted. "Serve you right if she turned around and gave it to her schoolmaster."

I had told him my troubles, I had to talk to someone. But it was a waste of breath.

On Sunday, we had a visit from old Braithwick. When, he wanted to know, were we going to have the meadow surveyed? He was most unpleasant about it. "Got plans for that piece of land," he informed us. "You know what I mean to do with it? Raise pigs. Yes, sir. Agricultural society says there's money to be made in pig farming and I believe it."

Pigs on a coffee plantation! I thought Grandfather would explode like one of his bombs. But Braithwick was not fooling. "I'll be here again on Saturday," he shouted, "and if the survey's not done I'll see my solicitors! You won't get out of it!"

"Grandfather," I said sadly, when he'd gone, "what's happened to us? Land lost, girl lost...What did we do to deserve such a plague of miseries?"

For once he couldn't think of an answer.

"You don't suppose Burying Bessie has put a spell on us, do you?" I suggested.

He shook his head. "She'd do it; don't think she wouldn't. But all this happened before you bought the mule."

"So it did," I said hopelessly.

In telling you what followed, I can only repeat what I heard from Stanley Henderson, a worker of ours, who was sweet on the Clarks' cook.

Marybelle, it seemed, was giving trouble. She'd been cooperative at first, just long enough for Constance to become enormously fond of her, but then her disposition had undergone an abrupt and remarkable change. Apparently she had taken a dislike to 'Bottom Bottle. I couldn't believe it was an antipathy to Constance.

"Miss Constance is convinced, sir," said Stanley, "that you did give she the beast to vex she. Her is determined to ride the ill-mannered thing and keeps getting thrown off."

"Are you sure of this?" I asked, thoroughly shaken.

"It's what me hear, sir."

More stories reached Glenfoyle as the days passed. Some of them I simply would not believe. Then by Pilcher Daniels,

our headman, I was given an eyewitness report of a happening in the village.

"Miss Constance came riding up the road on Marybelle," said Pilcher, "and you could see she and the mule were having an argument. That's a stubborn mule, Mr. Kenneth, and while Miss Constance is far and away the best mule-riding woman in the parish of St. Thomas, she just couldn't make her behave.

"They came into the village at mail-sorting time, with everyone gathered there in front of the post office waiting for the window to open. Marybelle was marching along with her knees high, tossing her pretty head up and down and Miss Constance was pulling on the reins for all she was worth, trying to turn her.

"Well, sir, you know what happened? Right there at the post office, with all those people watching, that mule suddenly stopped dead and bucked Miss Constance off. Pitched her clean out of the saddle into the middle of the road. And then you know what, Mr. Kenneth? The mule stood there and laughed at her."

"Don't exaggerate, Pilcher," I said, feeling the blood drain down to my feet.

"She laughed," he insisted. "She can talk, too. She said right out loud and distinct as you please, '*There! That'll show you!*'"

I leaned closer to catch a whiff of his breath, but Pilcher was always a sober and dependable man.

"She tried to run off," he added, "and when I stopped her she looked me straight in the eyes and said plain as day, '*It won't do you a bit of good, friend. I'll misbehave again.*'"

"A clear case of bewitchment," I said, shaking my head.

"Clear as I ever saw," he agreed.

I hadn't any idea what to do about it. But at least I wasn't altogether unprepared when Connie's little yellow car came growling up the Glenfoyle drive the next day.

Never before had I seen Connie so angry and that's saying a good deal. We'd grown up together, remember, and she was a lass with spirit. All nine stone of her twitched with wrath now. Her pretty face was flushed; her eyes were patches of blue sky full of lightning. I was so fascinated, I didn't realise the schoolmaster was with her.

Connie put her hands on her hips and glared at me. "All right, Kenneth Mowbray," she shouted. "You've had your

little fun. Now you trot yourself straight down to my yard and get your ill-bred talking mule out of there! And never speak to me again!"

"Connie," I said, "I'm sorry and all that, but I give you my word I didn't know the mule was bewitched."

"You know! You bewitched her yourself!"

"Nothing of the sort," I protested. "Be reasonable. I've no such powers and you know it."

That's how we talked, Connie shouting accusations, I defending myself as best I could, while Jeremy Woodleigh stood by the car gazing at us both as though we'd lost our reason. He was a decent fellow, I'll say that for him—didn't once try to inject himself into the quarrel. Perhaps, being fresh out from England, he didn't feel able to cope.

Come to think of it he didn't utter one word, not even goodbye, when Connie shoved him back into the car and drove off with him.

The following day, I sent our yard boy, Michael, down to Bottom Bottle for Marybelle; and when he had walked her home, not daring to ride her, I got into the saddle to see what would happen.

She gave me a most astonishing ride around the yard, all kittenish jumps and twitches; then when it suited her, she pitched me head-foremost into a geranium bed by the garage and leered at me. "*Try again, dearie*," she chortled.

"That settles it," I said to Grandfather, who'd been watching. "Back she goes to Bessie."

"Don't be stupid," said Grandfather.

"Now look here!" I shouted, in no mood for arguments. "This unlikely animal has cost me my life's happiness and jeered at me to boot."

"Used to be things called horse brasses to protect animals against evil spirits, but I don't know where we'd get any now," Grandfather said. "Calm yourself. Leave Marybelle to me."

"*Ha!*" said Marybelle, baring her teeth.

"You be quiet, lass," said Grandfather.

"*Make me*," said she.

"Michael," said Grandfather, "put her in the pen and see the gate is shut tight." But the yard boy had fled. No talking mules for him. We had to do it ourselves.

Grandfather spent the rest of that awful day secretly chuckling to himself. It drove me to distraction. "Trouble with you," he said, "is that you've got no imagination."

"Can't you see I'm heartbroken?" I retorted. "I could strangle that mule!"

"Be a fool thing to do," he said calmly. "Like killing the goose that laid the golden eggs."

There was just no use talking to him. I went to my room and composed a long letter of explanation and apology to Constance. Then I recalled the look on her lovely face when she drove off with Jeremy Woodleigh. I tore the letter up. What was the use?

Saturday morning, right on schedule, old Braithwick drove into the yard and came hobbling up the veranda steps. At sight of him, I groaned.

Grandfather didn't groan, he grinned. "Where's your solicitors, Jonathan?" he said. "Thought you were going to put 'em on to us."

"They'll let fly with the writs when I give the word," said Braithwick. "First I want to see this mule of yours."

"Why?"

"Never saw a talking mule. Heard of a few but never saw one. You up to some trickery in this?"

"She talks," said Grandfather. "Come and see."

Old Braithwick followed to the pen and looked Marybelle over. "Humph," he said obviously disappointed. "Same mule I admired in the meadow. She wasn't talking then."

"*Ha!*" said Marybelle.

"What?" said Braithwick. "What's that you said?"

"*Said 'Ha!'*" Marybelle snorted. "*Ha!*"

"M'm," said Braithwick. "Talks a little, at least. Mind if I ride her about the yard, Mowbray?"

"Saddle her for the gentleman, Kenneth," Grandfather said to me, and I did. But before the old curmudgeon could put foot to stirrup, Grandfather scribbled on a bit of paper and thrust it at him. "Sign this, if you please," he ordered. "Says we're not to be held accountable if you get hurt."

"Humph!" said Braithwick, signing. "Never saw a mule yet I couldn't stay on." Up he went, with a good firm grip on the reins. "Now then, whatever your name is, let's see if you're as pretty as you look."

"*Name's Marybelle*," said Marybelle, turning her head.

"By George, you do talk!" cried Braithwick. "Well now, let's get acquainted!"

I shut my eyes in an agony of apprehension as he rode off. If Constance Clark couldn't stay on that bewitched

animal—and if I couldn't—it was a foregone conclusion that old Braithwick wouldn't be able to. He hadn't the legs. And he'd sue us, if he suffered any broken bones, paper or no paper.

"Don't know what you're missing," Grandfather chuckled. "Open your eyes."

I did and blinked. It was not to be believed.

Placid as you please, without a twitch, our golden mule was walking about the yard with little Jonathan Braithwick perched peacock-proud on her back. Had she been walking in her sleep she couldn't have been less energetic. Braithwick turned her easily, brought her up to us and slid triumphantly from the saddle.

"Thought to scare me off with your bit of paper, did you?" he said, leering at Grandfather. "You ought to know I don't scare that easy. I want this mule, Mowbray. How much?"

"She's not for sale," said Grandfather.

"Course she is. Everything's for sale at a price. Give you a hundred pounds."

"You're deep in a well," said Grandfather.

"Two hundred."

"Still in a well."

"Five hundred, dammit!"

"The meadow," said Grandfather.

"The meadow's worth a thousand!"

"Not to you. Take you till doomsday to turn a thousand pounds profit on pigs. The meadow or nothing," said Grandfather.

"You're a thief," Braithwick said with a groan, "but you've got the best of me. Have your yard boy take the animal down to my place at once." Then grinning, he patted Marybelle's lovely neck. "You hear that, girl? You're mine!"

"*Am I?*" said Marybelle. "*Ha!*"

I couldn't believe it, even after Braithwick had signed over the meadow and departed. I knew one thing, though. If this was to be that sort of day, with impossible things happening, I had a call to make.

"Come along," I said to Grandfather. "You had something to do with this, though I'm blessed if I know what. I may need more of the same."

"You may at that," Grandfather agreed. "It's Saturday."

"What's Saturday got to do with it?"

"The schoolmaster has no school."

I hurried him out to the car and we rattled at top speed down the road to Bottom Bottle.

The sun shone. Doctor-birds darted among the hibiscus blossoms. Mrs. Clark sat at her sewing-machine on the veranda. Constance was arranging flowers.

"Is he here?" I asked, looking about.

"If you mean dear Mr. Woodleigh," said Mrs. Clark, "no. He's gone."

"For good," said Constance, turning to me with hands outstretched. "If you want to kick me, you can."

I did a thorough job of kissing her instead, to make up for all the time I'd lost. "What happened?" I asked.

"Nothing," said she, "except that he insists a mule can't talk and thinks the rest of us dotty because we know better."

"Lucky you found out in time," I said.

"Can't see why they allow such a man to teach," said Grandfather. "Could do untold harm. What do they want our kids to be—a lot of ignoramuses?"

"I didn't like him anyway," said Connie, snuggling up to me.

"Nor I," said her mother. "Grandfather Mowbray, come and help me make tea. You can put a spot of whisky in yours."

She and Grandfather disappeared and I sat on the veranda steps with Connie. I was telling her about old Braithwick and Marybelle when our elders came out. Connie fixed Grandfather with an accusing stare.

"You counter-bewitched her, that's what you did," said Connie.

Grandfather chuckled. "Nothing of the sort. Don't know how. Besides, she was still talking. Had to be talking or he wouldn't have wanted her."

"What did you do then?"

He produced a little plastic bottle from his pocket and chuckled once again.

"These," he said. "Doctor in Kingston gave 'em to me months ago and said I was to take 'em 'stead of bottled goods. Damned if I would. Tranquillisers, he called 'em. Marybelle thought they were sweets."

With a guffaw, he slapped his thigh and all but knocked himself off the veranda. "Oh, my!" he sputtered. "If that old buzzard's in the saddle when the effect wears off, I do hope I'm there to see it!"

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A SPOT OF IRISH BLARNEY

STILL THRESHING

by John D. Sheridan

THE little cabinet is lined with mirrors. This is so that the customer can see himself from all angles. But here is one customer who doesn't want to see himself from all angles. You might call me a very queer customer, for I have no angles to speak of. In a manner of speaking, I am in two places at once; round at the front and out at the back.

If a man is as old as he feels, I am still threshing; but if he is as old as he looks in the tailor's mirrors I am in a bad way.

When I enter the cabinet I am in the prime of life (give or take a year or two), but age overtakes me when I slip off my coat and waistcoat. And I am not just one elderly man. I am several elderly men.

The place is full of me. I am framed in every mirror. I stretch away into infinity. I am like a muster of Boer War veterans.

The tailor enters presently with my unfinished suit hanging over his arm, and approaches me from all directions.

He has *multiplied himself into* a great convention of tailors, and soon they begin to drape unfinished suits about an immensity of elderly and dispirited men.

The tailors are all of one mind, and their movements are synchronised. When my tailor sticks in a pin, all the other tailors stick in pins.

When he turns me round to get a good look at me, each of his colleagues turns his charge round to get a good look at him. And if the

tailor in the left-hand mirror makes a chalk-mark on a broad back, the tailor in the right-hand mirror makes an identical mark on an equally broad back in the same place and at the same instant.

Presently my own tailor loses patience—not with me, but with the nightmare garment he is working on—and rips off an offending sleeve so quickly that I feel my arm has come away with it. And the other tailors are not a second behind him. Every man-Jack of them rips off a sleeve with Burke-and-Hare speed. The whole thing has a Grand Guignol quality.

My tailor doesn't think much of me (physically, I mean). He regards me as a difficult subject. He thinks that we might have a little more room here and give a little there. He purses his lips, quietens a gurgitation of pins with his tongue, and then concedes that we might take a trifle off the length of the coat.

He always consults me about these changes, and wants to know my preferences. But I have no preferences. I am a broken man. And I can speak for all the battered ancients in the mirrors. They are all broken men, and they would make no moan, if the tailor fitted them blindfold. An inch one way or the other matters nothing now, for they don't look as if they are long for the world of suits.

They look as if one more clean shirt apiece would see them through.

This depressing ritual is known sometimes as a fit-on and sometimes as a try-on. Either name is appropriate. For I don't like it. I hate it. It takes the starch out of me. It puts years on me. It reminds me of another garment for which I shall be measured—and very approximately at that—when I am in the prone position and a good fit is no longer of importance.

When the tailor slips off the scarecrow he says that it will make quite a nice suit, a hard-wearing suit. But I am not very interested in how it will look, and still less in how it will wear. When he asks me when I would like to have it delivered I feel like telling him not to delay too long, lest he should have to be paid out of my estate. I also feel like telling him that he should leave a little leeway here and there so that if the worst comes to the worst it could be adjusted to fit one of the executors—who, being ineligible for any testamentary gifts, are surely entitled to something out of the wreck.

The tailor, however, is in the best of form. He says it is good weather for the time of year. I can't see anything good about it.

I feel a little better when I get into my old coat and waistcoat, for the mirrors are more merciful then, and when I get out into the street I make a complete recovery. I hold my head high.

I sniff at the breeze and think fine thoughts:

> *There's night and day, brother, both sweet things: sun, moon, and stars, brother, all sweet things: likewise there's a wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother.*

I begin to think about my new suit. I agree that it will look well and wear well. I begin to think about my *next* new suit. I see long years of new suits stretching away into the sunset.

And I feel that the tailor was right. It *is* fine weather for the time of year.

No man is as old as he looks in the tailor's mirrors. No man *could* be as old as that and still be walking about. A man is as old as he feels, and I am still threshing.

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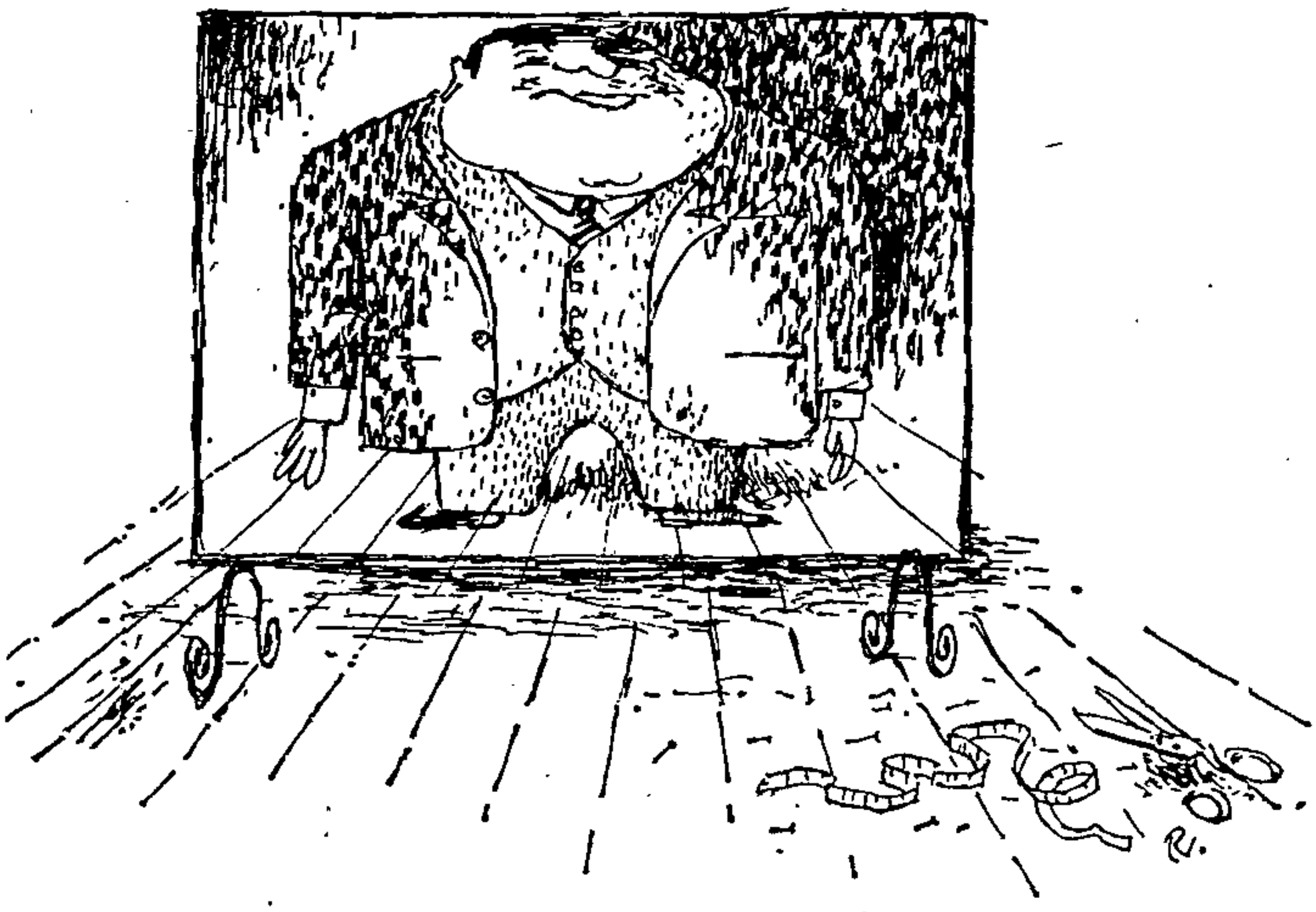

Miss Rawlins regrets . . .

by GERALD SPARROW

THE year 1702 had much to commend it to Miss Pleasant Rawlins, for she had recently become an heiress in her own right, and she had bought a charming house in London, not far from the Oxenden Chapel, where she worshipped. She lived with her governess—she was still not of age—and three women servants—one a cook, and two housemaids who kept the house beautifully and helped Miss Rawlins in the endless crochet work which was her pride and joy.

It was not an exciting household, perhaps, but it ran happily on smooth wheels. There was ample money, and all the women got on well together. Miss Rawlins, an amiable young woman, treated her staff as friends—as indeed they were—unless, of course, she was entertaining, when there was a great display of curtsying, cut-glass, and long-planned meals . . .

To students of human nature the household might perhaps be said to lack balance. There was no tobacco in the house, and the wine in the cellar was neglected except at party-time. And, of course, there was no man. All the ladies seem to have had a perfect horror of men, whom they regarded—or pretended to regard—as great hulking brutes likely to spoil or soil the delightful French carpet in the drawing room. It was, if we must admit it, an unnatural household, without the warm roughage of life, without conflict, without purpose, yet it was a happy household, kept together by the rigid rules of the English caste system, in which everyone knew her place.

Miss Rawlins would be awakened of a morning by Miss Peabody, her governess, who would gently draw the blinds and present her pupil and mistress with a cup of tea.

From that moment until Miss Rawlins retired at five minutes past ten o'clock at night, having taken her cup of cocoa, the

day was well ordered. There was breakfast, and the reading of the newspapers, the Court Circular in particular. There was the morning shopping expedition to buy some silks or chiffons. There was luncheon at home or, perhaps, if accompanied by friends, at Vauxhall. There was afternoon tea, and lessons in French and German, as well as the twice-weekly visit of the music master—a sedate young man, with sidewhiskers, who seemed to have attended to his job and never so much as held Miss Rawlins' hand. It was, perhaps, a little disappointing.

And then, of course, there were the visits to the Oxenden Chapel, which Miss Rawlins attended with assiduity.

Yes, it was quite a life, and Miss Rawlins never seemed to have a moment. Correspondence took up a lot of time, writing to her aunts, uncles and cousins—both her parents had died—and then, as if all this were not enough, there was visiting as well. Miss Rawlins, accompanied by one or two of her faithful retainers, would take the coach for Oxford or for Exeter, where she had relatives. These were great occasions, and the preparations fór them seemed to make Miss Rawlins busier than ever. From a hard, worldly point of view she may not have had anything to do, but in practice she was a busy young woman, who each month had a business meeting—which she did not understand—with her trustees.

It often occurred to Miss Rawlins that one day she would have gently to break out of the golden net that tied her down, for she was well aware, through her reading, that she was missing a large number of balls and masques, occasions where one was apt to meet young men of good family with private means. who were not fortune-hunters, and who might—who knows?—fall desperately in love with, and marry, Miss Rawlins.

But the comfort and conformity of her life kept Miss Rawlins from dwelling on these possibilities too urgently.

There seemed nothing whatever to link Miss Rawlins with a Mr. Swendsen, a Danish business man, who lived part of the year in London and part of it in Copenhagen. Mr. Swendsen dealt in timber, dealt in particular—and did much travelling—in the sailing ships that plied between the ports of London, Hamburg, Oslo, Copenhagen and Stockholm.

Mr. Swendsen was a robust type. He drank, he smoked—cigars were becoming very popular—he whored a little and he swore and spat with the best. He was a shrewd business man, and well liked by his business associates and his drinking companions. Unfortunately, the timber trade had not been too good lately, and Mr. Swendsen spent more than he should have

done on girls, drink, horses and cards. He was reputed to be wealthy, but was, in fact, very hard-up.

The even tenor of the life of Miss Rawlins was hardly disturbed by the fact that she made the acquaintance of a Miss Stott who lived nearby. Miss Rawlins kept herself to herself, as the saying goes, but she was a kind-hearted girl and hated offending people. Although Miss Stott was clearly not her social equal, she seemed lonely, and often Miss Rawlins, if she met her in the street, would say a gracious word to her.

One day—it was a gusty Sunday in March—Miss Rawlins was walking with her governess to the Oxenden Chapel when Miss Stott passed in a carriage, and, seeing Miss Rawlins, stopped and offered her a lift. Miss Rawlins and her companion, glad to be relieved of battling against the elements, got in. The carriage drove off, but not to the Oxenden Chapel. It went to Drury Lane.

Miss Rawlins protested at this, but Miss Stott said she had a very urgent matter to attend to, and she would get Miss Rawlins to the chapel in time. The urgent business that Miss Stott had to attend to was, however, the abduction of Miss Rawlins; a business that Miss Stott was conducting with Mr. Swendsen, the hard-pressed gentleman from Denmark, who for months had been looking for a likely victim, and who had been provided with the name of Miss Rawlins by the obliging Miss Stott, who agreed to act as procuress in the matter.

On the way to Drury Lane the carriage was stopped by two men, who said they were bailiffs of the Fleet, and Miss Rawlins was charged there and then with trying to escape from London to cheat her tradespeople and avoid her debts.

Now at this time the dear old laws of England, which we all so admire and respect, were a little harsh on debtors. The protection of the property of traders and merchants had become a religion, and the law, always ready to crawl to the fashion of the day, saw to it that if one were arrested in a matter of debt, before any proof was forthcoming, one should linger in the festering, malodorous, evil Fleet Prison.

Miss Rawlins was therefore horrified with the accusations of the bailiffs. She protested in tears that there was not the remotest truth in any of their allegations, that she was a young lady of substance who paid her tradespeople punctually.

"You can tell that to the judge, ma'am," the bailiff said, and off they drove in the carriage—very crowded now—to the Star and Garter Inn in Drury Lane.

On the way, the bailiffs discussed the case and made it very

plain that Miss Rawlins was in real trouble. It looked to them as if she would remain in prison for months while "this unfortunate matter" was cleared up. She might be innocent, as she said, but how were they to know? Complaints had been made, serious complaints.

The carriage arrived at the Star and Garter, and Miss Rawlins, arrested now by the bailiffs, was hustled into an upstairs room where an imposing gentleman who might have been a lawyer—or a crook—was waiting. He explained carefully to Miss Rawlins that grave charges had indeed been made against her. He quoted the names of tradespeople who had made them—in writing.

Miss Rawlins said, "But sir, there is no vestige of truth in any of these allegations."

The legal-looking gentleman smiled and said, "You will have to satisfy the Lord Chief Justice of that."

"The Lord Chief Justice? When am I to see him?"

The gentleman explained that His Lordship was coming over from the Law Courts privately to deal with the matter of Miss Rawlins. It was realised that she was a young lady of position, and everyone wanted to prevent the necessity of sending her to prison if it could be avoided.

Miss Rawlins sat down on a bench while the gentleman and the bailiffs regaled themselves with ale to while away the time until His Lordship in person was free to deal with the matter. They had not long to wait. In less than half an hour an even more imposing figure of a man arrived. The men bowed, and Miss Rawlins did not doubt that this was the Lord Chief Justice of England. He was accompanied by our Mr. Swendsen, who was curiously attired, as if for a wedding.

"Is this the young woman?"

His Lordship was assured that this was Mistress Pleasant Rawlins.

"Ah! Let me see the complaints that have been made."

A sheaf of papers, tied with red tape in the manner of a barrister's brief, was handed to His Lordship. Very carefully, one by one, he perused them. Graver and graver did his countenance become. At last he put them down.

"Miss Rawlins, you appear to be in serious trouble. We all regret this, but on the evidence contained in these written depositions I should have no choice but to send you to the debtors' prison until the matter has been investigated.

"That," added His Lordship, "might take months—or years . . ."

Hearing this, Miss Rawlins wept and begged His Lordship not to send her to prison, for all the world knew the conditions prevailing in these places, the typhoid, the malnutrition, the sadistic guards and the filth. She would die in such a place.

His Lordship, still stern, but relenting a little, said, " If I were to put you on bail of a thousand pounds could you at once find that money?"

" I am still in the hands of my trustees, sir. It might take a week to raise such a sum . . ."

His Lordship hardened. " Then there is no alternative."

One of the bailiffs, who had been standing with folded hands listening to this grim pantomime, then spoke.

" Could not the young lady be married, my Lord?"

" Married? To whom? When? If she could marry, then, of course, her debts, if there are any, would become her husband's concern, and if he were a man of substance she could go free now . . ."

Mr. Swendsen then spoke his part. He had been standing in his finery, looking very thirsty and impatient.

" I would marry this attractive young lady to save her from the terrible predicament in which she finds herself."

Miss Rawlins dried her tears and shot a glance at Mr. Swendsen. Why, he was nearly old enough to be her father; but not quite. He was manly-looking. He carried himself with a swagger that appealed to her. Would it be possible just to marry him formally and secure her release, without any of the usual consequences of marriage?

Mr. Swendsen spoke up again. " I have no desire, until we have become acquainted, to force myself on this young lady. If we go through a form of marriage, that will be sufficient to secure her freedom. Later we can decide if there are those bonds of affection and mutual respect that would bind us together in the sight of God as well as in the eyes of the law."

Mr. Swendsen thought that he had put it very neatly. It had sounded gallant, undemanding, just right for the occasion. Miss Rawlins realised that this was the moment of decision. Should she go through a form of marriage with this elderly but virile-looking Danish gentleman—or should she be led off to the debtors' dungeon? What a choice for a well-brought-up young lady! She did not hesitate too long.

Turning to His Lordship she said, " My Lord, in the dire predicament in which, through no fault of my own, I find myself, I have no choice but to submit to a formal marriage with this gentleman."

The atmosphere of the room was transformed. Happy smiles came from His Lordship and the bailiffs. Miss Rawlins' governess, who had been the trembling witness of all the scenes, fainted, and had to be revived by a little brandy. Mr. Swendsen crossed the room to Miss Rawlins, bowed, and, with a gesture of ineffable gallantry, raised her right hand to his lips.

A chaplain and a clerk of the Fleet arrived, and a marriage ceremony took place, His Lordship retiring just before the chaplain appeared on the scene. The bailiffs also vanished. Miss Rawlins was alone with her governess and Mr. Swendsen.

"Who is the groom?"

"I am, sir, and this lady is my lovely bride . . ."

The full marriage service was read, the chaplain, a genuine clergyman, having no idea of what had gone before, married the couple.

Wine was served. The chaplain was discreetly paid, and Mr. and Mrs. Swendsen were man and wife.

Now Mr. Swendsen's idea was to get his bride out of Britain as soon as possible. He would have liked to take her to Copenhagen until such time as Miss Rawlins' friends had become accustomed to the idea that she had married a Danish adventurer, or, as Mr. Swendsen regarded himself, a Danish gentleman in trade . . .

But Pleasant was in no hurry. The terror of prison receded now, and she wanted to contact her friends. This was just what Mr. Swendsen did not want her to do. Why, the whole plot—the phoney Lord Chief Justice, the spurious bailiffs, the unlawful arrest—might come to light if she did that.

So a duel developed between Pleasant and her husband. Like so many other cosseted young ladies, Miss Rawlins was used to getting her own way, and had an admirable streak of obstinacy.

On their first night of marriage Mr. Swendsen became drunk, and fell into bed without kissing his bride. Pleasant told herself she was mightily relieved by this, but was she? Was it not also an astounding insult?

Perhaps Mr. Swendsen had made his one unpardonable mistake. However this may be, she managed to slip out of bed very early next morning and at dawn send her governess with a message to her trustees and other close friends. Mr. Swendsen, blissfully unaware of this, rose in due course, kissed his wife and trundled off to book passages to Copenhagen . . .

Miss Rawlins' friends were greatly disturbed, and acted with

commendable speed. Exactly what was the legal position?

There had been an illegal arrest that had been witnessed by a number of people.

Miss Rawlins, an heiress, had been abducted.

The Lord Chief Justice of England and the bailiffs had been impersonated.

The most dire threats had been used to persuade Miss Rawlins to marry Mr. Swendsen.

The documents in the case—complaints from tradesmen—had been forged; and forgery was a capital crime.

Finally, a legal marriage had taken place, officiated over by a real priest, who had no idea of the circumstances of cheating and duress that lay behind the union.

Clearly, if all these facts were true, Swendsen could be arrested on charges of conspiracy, abduction and forgery—and the marriage ceremony—having been obtained by threats—could be declared void. The marriage had not been consummated owing to Mr. Swendsen's happy drinking bout, and this made things easier for the Church.

But as soon as Mr. Swendsen knew what was happening he never wanted to see this ungrateful bride of his again. He wanted to save himself from a fate he could not even contemplate. Perhaps if he had loved her that first night all this might never have happened?

As it was, the story had a grim and savage ending, for Mr. Swendsen was a victim of the terrifying savagery of British law, the very law which he sought to use to intimidate his bride. He was tried. He was convicted. He appealed. The sentence of the lower court was confirmed. And that sentence was the dread one of death. The judge said, "Kurt Swendsen, you shall be hanged by the neck until you are dead."

So one spring morning, just a year after the whole affair started, Kurt Swendsen was taken from his cell, his neck was washed, the rope was oiled, he was pinioned and placed on the trap, and with a sudden movement of the lever the platform vanished so that the rope snapped his neck.

That would teach foreign adventurers to abduct young English ladies of fortune.

Should we call Kurt Swendsen a great abductor? Yes, I think we may. Anyone who has the effrontery to produce a Lord Chief Justice of England out of his hat, as it were, was no ordinary criminal.

Miss Pleasant married in due course a country squire.

© Gerald Sparrow 1964

Final instalment of Argosy's exciting serial of suspense

NEW READERS... Warren Stone, an American literary agent on a visit to Yugoslavia to find new authors, is wakened in his Belgrade hotel room by a young messenger from Master Karst, and as the boy, Antun Vuk, falls dead, Stone glimpses the scarred, totem-pole figure of his murderer.

Karst, ex-Vice-President, ex-Party leader, ex-Communist, has written searing criticism of the Party, and is now held under surveillance for refusing to hand over his MSS.

Stone takes on the dangerous job of smuggling out Karst's writings and has his secret instructions to go to Dubrovnik, where a man will lead him to the hidden MSS, and help him escape to Italy. Stone's life is threatened by Stevan Jazak, the totem-pole. And powerful opponents: Dr. Decani of the Secret Police, Michael Townsend, US attaché, and enigmatic Maxim Grout are each planning to use Stone to get the Karst writings and stop publication.

Stone is in love with beautiful Eleanor Hvar, his interpreter, the widow of war hero, Mirko Sutnjak, who fought beside Karst and Grout. Eleanor believes Karst murdered her husband—and wants his MSS.

Driven by Grout, Stone is on his way to meet Eleanor...

THE THOUSAND DOORS

FOR Warren Stone, it had been a long, painful day. What he wanted was to be left alone to dine with Eleanor Hvar, to watch her face and listen to her talk, even if, as he was certain, she too, like Doctor Decani and Townsend, would be after Karst's manuscript. But he ought to invite Maxim Grout in to meet her and perhaps to have dinner with them, yet he did not want to share her.

"Okay," Maxim Grout said, "you're here now, Warren."

Stone saw that they were parked next to a building where a small blue and red neon sign flickered in the dingy darkness announcing the single word, *Balkan*, and the neon outlines of a curved sword flashed on and off.

"Why don't you join us for a drink?" Stone asked.

"Us?"

"Yes, Eleanor Hvar and me—she is Sutnjak's widow."

"Lili Sutnjak," Grout whispered hoarsely.

"You'll come?"

"I've wanted to meet her for a long time," Grout smiled shyly, his face working.

The restaurant was down a flight of steps, a series of three beautifully wainscoted rooms. The whitewashed walls were softened by great hangings of dark red velvet and textured by swords and scabbards, daggers and pistols and a variety of shields. In the far corner, five musicians played a haunting melody—a mixture of Arab keening and a Russian love song.

Eleanor Hvar was already seated at a table. The halo of darkness around her was almost tangible. She wore a black dress of stiff material whose modest *décolletage* and short sleeves showed her dark skin. Her black hair, now high on her head and held in place by a shimmering pearl *barrette*, left her neck exposed and made her seem terribly young and vulnerable. Her darkness, intensified by a masked but discernible excitement, exaggerated her every slightest movement. When she saw him, she raised her hand, a terse reluctant gesture, her long fingers cupped as if they held a wine glass, and there was—or did he imagine it?—the faintest leap of irritation that thinned her lips at the sight of someone arriving with him.

"Eleanor," Stone said, when they reached her table, "this is Maxim Grout, of the American Embassy."

by Abraham Rothberg

© 1964, 1965 by Abraham Rothberg

Eleanor's face flushed, paled, and she began to stammer. In a faint voice, as if she were going to cry, she finally murmured, "Oh, Max, Max."

"Eleanor . . . Lili," Grout said, bending over her right hand and kissing it. He sat down, holding her hand, her palm on his face.

"I didn't know you were here," she said haltingly.

"I came back again only last year," Grout told her, his face altered by a tenderness that stripped age, fat and drink from his features, and left the strong bones and clear eyes prominent that at twenty-five must have made him a very handsome man indeed.

"I got your messages," she said tremulously, "but when I did manage to reach you, you'd been wounded and evacuated to Italy."

"But I wrote you from there, and from the States," Grout said. "And I had no answer."

"I never got the letters," she said simply.

"I thought you were dead," Grout said softly. "I made some inquiries, not too many because I thought it might not be . . . good for you, but there was no Lili Sutnjak."

"Didn't Konstanty tell you?"

"No." Grout's face was sad. "Karst and I didn't talk much even during the war, and almost never personally after."

"Because of Mirko's . . . murder?"

"Because of that . . . and politics. I saw the name Eleanor Hvar as translator on English books from time to time, but I never connected her with Lili Sutnjak . . ."

"Warren," Eleanor Hvar—or Lili Sutnjak—said, "you couldn't have pleased me more." She squeezed his arm, but brought her other hand into Grout's.

They made a ceremony of ordering the dinner, assuring Stone that it would be the very best he'd tasted since arriving in Yugoslavia—and it was. They began with delicious Danube sturgeon black caviar and had ice-cold, light-green wine that was a perfect accompaniment. They mixed the national dish of varied hot spiced meats, *cevapcici*, with a Turkish *musaka*, and washed both down with a local dry red wine that was not even bottled. Only over the tart cherry strudel and hot black coffee, and then over the still hotter *slivovitz* afterwards, did they begin to talk of the war, and once more Stone felt his exclusion. Even his war had not been so bitter.

Eleanor Hvar told how she had first met Mirko Sutnjak in Belgrade after the Germans came. Her parents were dead.

Mirko needed couriers, and though she was not a Communist, Eleanor Hvar had joined in carrying messages, then arms around Belgrade. So she had become a part of his group, then his mistress, and finally his wife.

When Mirko was ordered to leave Belgrade for Dalmatia, he had taken her to Dubrovnik with him to his parents, so she and her unborn child would be safe. Someone reported them as the family of the filthy Bolshevik traitor, Mirko Sutnjak. Italian Army units turned them over to the Gestapo. They wanted Mirko; they said his family must know where he was. None of them told, however, because none of them knew, so the Gestapo shot Mirko's father, and broke four of his mother's ribs and her arm in the interrogation—in a matter of weeks she was dead.

For Eleanor, the Gestapo reserved their special "persuasion," because what man would leave his pregnant wife without telling her where to reach him in an emergency? They beat her with leather-tipped bicycle spokes until she collapsed and haemorrhaged. By the time she arrived at the *Wehrmacht* hospital in Sarajevo, she was in labour: the child, a boy, was born dead.

When she recovered, the Germans drove her down to Gestapo headquarters a second time, but on the way Partisans managed to ambush the car. They killed the driver and her guards and, freed, she went with them. "It was a miracle," she said.

"That was Petar Decani's group?" Grout asked. It was a statement rather than a question.

"Yes."

"And he told you Mirko had been killed?"

She nodded. "I didn't believe him. I was so weak I couldn't tell if it was all a nightmare or real. I had a fever. We had no doctor—almost no medicine, but Petar Decani nursed me and brought me through."

Listening to her, Stone understood why Decani had chosen Eleanor to be his "literary guide."

Grout told her how, when Decani was transferred to Partisan headquarters, he had brought the first news of her. "Karst sent him to me, you know," Grout remarked. "It was Petar, who told me they had sent you to Slovenia."

In recounting the years since the war, Eleanor told how she had been sent to England for two years on fellowships, and now was a translator, an expert—she used the term ironically—on English literature. She had worked and studied.

"*Only* worked and studied?" Grout looked askance. "Why didn't you marry? Mirko would surely have wanted you to."

"I don't know," she answered, with a quick, almost furtive glance at Stone, as if to see how he was taking what was said. "It was not that simple."

"It never is," Stone said, attempting to reassure her, "but Maxim is right. And you are still young."

It was late and they were all glassy-eyed with fatigue. Stone suggested they leave and Grout offered to drive them both home. Sitting close together in the car's front seat, they reached her house. In parting she kissed them both on the cheek and said goodnight, yet Stone sensed she had expected something more of him, though what he couldn't tell.

As they drove on, Grout finally grumbled aloud, "That complicates matters still further."

"What does?"

"Lili Sutnjak."

"Why?"

"Why, Warren? Because she was Mirko's wife and, therefore, must hate Karst. Because she and Petar Decani are old friends—she is deeply in his debt—and she must be working *for* or *with* him. Because you are obviously very fond of her."

At Stone's hotel, Grout stopped the car but kept the engine running. "Thanks for dinner," he said, "I owe you a debt for introducing me to Mirko's wife. I felt guilty, not even knowing if she was alive."

"Why didn't you ask Decani, then?" Stone finally said.

"But I did," Grout replied. "He told me she was dead." Then, with a subdued roar, the car and Grout were gone.

Decani was as good as his word. Stone's schedule of appointments was delivered at breakfast in the hotel the next morning. Its arrangements covered an entire fortnight, more than two dozen writers, five cities—none of them Dubrovnik—state and regional publishing houses. Attached was a note from Decani saying that Eleanor Hvar would accompany him as interpreter.

When Stone got back from breakfast, Eleanor was on the telephone. She would pick him up in half an hour to take him for his first appointment. She arrived exactly on time in a small blue Fiat, all business, dressed in a prim blue-grey tweed suit of obviously British cut, and with English walking shoes which accentuated her slender, tapering ankles.

And she remained all business all through that fortnight. Though she called him Warren when they were alone, it carried no trace of personal feeling, and when she interpreted, or when they were with others, it was always Mr. Stone. She was efficient, competent—and remote.

Each evening after dinner, they went to the hotel's public rooms with some of the books and manuscripts they'd acquired. She would translate at sight to give him the "feel" of a book while he sat smoking and listening. At about ten, she would get up, say goodnight, sometimes formally shaking hands.

She had made it plain that she didn't want him to accompany her to her room, though because he was afraid that the totem-pole and others were still following them, he protested at first until she showed him the small Walther automatic she carried in her handbag. Stone usually lingered, having a brandy nightcap, and then he too went up to bed.

Twice, when his flesh and loneliness were kindled by her being in an adjoining room, and through the poorly-built walls he heard her own restless turning in bed, he drank himself to sleep. Otherwise he managed the formal courtesy and distant *camaraderie* she seemed determined to impose.

Slowly, piece by piece, a picture of the state of the country's letters emerged from their talks and travels. The older writers were mired in the past. The younger writers seemed not yet to have found their voices, or their roots. Virtually no-one wrote books about the present; the few they found were so politically orthodox as to be inhuman and absurd, and even in these there was the ever-present gingerliness that spelt fear.

When their intensive trip was over and they were flying back to Belgrade, Stone became aware of how really tired he was. They had worked hard, it was true, but the strain of the relationship with Eleanor Hvar, and the anxiety of waiting for another attempt on their lives had told even more. In reality, it was the totem-pole he looked and waited for; Stone knew that when the real showdown came, it would be with him. There was something demented about Jazak's concentration on the task. Decani and Townsend only wanted Karst's manuscript—Jazak wanted Stone's life.

Next to him in the plane, Eleanor Hvar had fallen asleep. The *Fasten Your Seat Belt—No Smoking* sign flashed red, and Stone gently touched her arm to wake her. Her body turned towards him, and she groaned, then was instantly awake and rigid. She said something in another language,

then sharply, "What is it?" her hand already into her bag, reaching for the Walther automatic.

"We're landing," he replied softly, and they sat silent until the plane was on the ground.

While he waited for their luggage, Eleanor Hvar disappeared, and Stone ruefully wondered if she had gone to report to Decani. She was a long time in returning, and Stone carried the bags to a lounge and settled back for a smoke. When she did appear, she was white and staggering. Quickly, he sat her next to him, lit another cigarette and gave it to her. She drew on it deeply, two or three quick nervous breaths, then stubbed out the cigarette.

"They have put Konstanty Karst into a lunatic asylum," she said, her voice quavering. "The paper says he had a nervous collapse."

Even as he heard her, Stone registered the personal *Konstanty*. Her newspaper had dropped to the floor and now, noticing it, she leaned forward to pick it up and would, but for Stone's sustaining hand, have pitched forward on her face. Stone kept his arm around her shoulders, tightening his grip to still her trembling.

"Karst is no more insane than I am," Stone raged.

"Perhaps you're both insane," she said, trying to smile. "In this part of the world, mental hospitals are for dissident intellectuals. Here, if you put Karst in a lunatic asylum, you are treating him kindly, taking care of him. This way, instead of putting him in prison, where he might become a political martyr, even a political threat, he ceases being a political problem, and becomes a medical one."

In the cab she suddenly seized his coat lapels as if pleading for something, then turned her face into his chest and began to sob. He held her until she was cried out, and her sobbing over, and by then they were at her house. Silently she insisted he come in with her.

She slumped into the chair behind her desk, while Stone searched the house. From her bedroom he heard the phone ring, and then her muted "Warren," called him. When he returned to the living room, she was standing with her back to him looking out into the garden. "Petar wants to talk to you," she said, not turning round.

The phone receiver on the desk squawked, and he put it to his ear and said, "Stone speaking."

"Ah, good evening, Mister Stone," Decani said silkily. "Eleanor tells me you already know about poor Karst."

"I don't understand," Stone said. "Karst is no more insane than you are. Why have you got him locked up?"

"You'd like to see him released?"

"Of course. Who wants to see a sane man locked up in a madhouse?"

"Aren't we all sane men shut up in this madhouse world?" Decani inquired philosophically.

Stone was scarcely in the mood for that kind of tone. "Is there something you wanted, Doctor Decani? I'm exhausted. I'd like to get back to the hotel to bed."

"Back to the hotel?" Decani said. There was something so snide, yet jealous, in the phrasing that Stone was brought up short. "Let me be frank with you," Decani continued, "if you want Karst released, you can help. Turn over that manuscript to us, and we'll let him out. If not, he's due for a long stay."

"But I have no manuscript," Stone protested.

"Perhaps not. Then Karst must have told you where it is, and you can tell us, *hein*?"

"I don't know where any Karst manuscript is," Stone said dully. "But I have a trunkful of scripts by other writers from this trip you so kindly arranged. You're welcome to any of these if you'll release him."

"I'm afraid none of those will do, Mister Stone. However, sleep on my offer—and sleep well." His laughter had a snarl in it, and then the line went dead.

"Why don't you give it to him?" Eleanor Hvar spoke from the window.

"*Because I have not got it*," Stone said, "and it wouldn't be mine to give even if I had." By putting Karst into an insane asylum, they not only clouded the possible influence of his book. They were prepared to declare him a lunatic if the book did get out of the country and was published. And how about the danger to Karst's wife, Alexandra, and the children? Karst had known what the risks were. His determination to have his work published . . . at all costs . . . was a conscious political act on his part. Alexandra, whatever her personal feelings, would never retract—she would urge Stone to press on with Karst's plan . . .

Eleanor moved from the window, and came swiftly to him. Drawing his face down to hers, she kissed him, her lips dry and harsh. As their mouths separated, from depths of certainty, the words came, scalding his mouth, "Decani is your lover, isn't he?"

She nodded mutely.

"And others too—since Mirko?"

"Many others," she responded savagely. "It's been long and lonely, and I like to sleep."

The pitiless, relentless needs: loneliness and liking to sleep. She meant having to sleep. To talk and sleep, and because of these necessities to make love that was not love at all but a confusion of limbs and purposes, a sexual limbo, the unquiet grave.

"Touch me," she pleaded, standing so close to him that her breasts grazed his chest.

"No, not now," he said indistinctly, "not yet." And as he spoke the words, and moved away, he knew he loved her . . .

A cab took him back to the same hotel. Stone didn't bother to unpack. He had checked his Luger again, and was just taking a couple of extra clips when the telephone rang. It was Decani. "You haven't changed your mind, have you?" Decani asked. "About Karst, I mean."

"In a way, yes. I've decided to go home," Stone said, making his voice as surly as he could. "My presence here has only led to danger for myself and for others . . ."

"For Karst?"

"Not only for him. For Eleanor Hvar. I've talked to your writers and critics, your editors and your professors, and I've got a valise full of manuscripts to take back . . ."

"But not Karst's?" Decani said.

"No. Not Karst's."

"Well, I hope we meet again, Mister Stone."

"I'm sure we will, Doctor Decani. Somehow, I'm sure we will."

By the time he showered and got into bed, Stone was already half-asleep, but the telephone soon was ringing again.

"Warren?" Eleanor's voice asked hesitatingly.

"Yes."

"Did I wake you?"

"No," he mumbled, "not at all."

The phone was silent except for the hum of the wires. Then, "I want you to come to Dubrovnik with me, Warren. Will you?" *She* was asking him! He tried to be alert.

"Didn't Decani tell you I was going home in a day or two?" he asked slowly.

You had to give them credit, Stone thought fuzzily. He'd only just told Decani he was going and they had a plan to keep him here working—and a good one. They didn't want

him to leave, or, to put it more accurately, they really wanted Karst's manuscript. It was all laid out like a welcome mat: a tryst in Dubrovnik with the beautiful Eleanor Hvar. She sounded so sincere and straightforward, but he was too tired to believe her. He willed himself to believe her...

He had his own appointment in Dubrovnik, to get those manuscripts of Karst's for himself. Something wily inside him warned him to feign reluctance. This was his chance, and Decani had handed it to him. "I don't know," he said.

"But this will be a vacation. Oh, Warren, Dubrovnik is so beautiful and I'd love to show it to you."

"Let me sleep on it," he said.

"All right," she said, after a very long pause. She sounded disappointed, rebuffed, very tired. "Sleep well, Warren."

"Goodnight, Eleanor," he said. He hung up the phone and turned his face into the pillow. But it was a long time before he fell asleep.

They flew to Dubrovnik on a gloomy morning two days later, so early Stone had to be up well before dawn to be on time for the flight. At the airport, he was cheered when Eleanor arrived in a black suit with a small leopard-skin collar, the suit tailored so severely that it made her body seem lush beneath: her hair held back by a matching headband of leopard and black velvet.

They flew over spurs of the Dinaric Alps, whose sides were covered with green moss and red furze. Stone's first glimpse of Dubrovnik was from a high hill in Plocce, just outside of the city. From the airport they had had a hair-raising ten-mile bus drive over a winding road that hugged the precipitous mountain edge and looked three-thousand feet down to great black rocks and choppy, green, rain-driven sea.

Then, unexpectedly, Dubrovnik was laid out below. Directly above it, groping clouds had broken open to permit a huge cone of pure yellow light to funnel down on the city. Its rainbow edges fell just outside Dubrovnik's sun-beiged battlements and towers, and the great wall that protected its little square of earth from the mainland. The variegated greens of cypress, pine and palm swayed in the yellow light, as did the red-shingled roofs, a few strikingly white towers, and a melon-shaped church cupola. In the sheltered harbour, guarded by a breakwater and a fortress, a flotilla of small boats rode the peacock waters.

"This is where you get off," Eleanor Hvar said, as the

bus drew up opposite his hotel. Stone asked if she didn't want him to go on with her, but she shook her head and confidently patted her handbag to remind him she still carried the black Walther automatic. She pressed a card into his hand: *Eleanor Hvar, 7 ulica Od Margarite, Dubrovnik.* "You can see it from here," she said, pointing vaguely towards the outer wall of the city. "Just inside the wall facing the sea." She held his hand tightly, then released it with a whispered, "Give me an hour, but don't be too long."

Stone registered at the desk, and went to his room. He threw himself on the bed to nap but he couldn't avoid thinking of Eleanor Hvar. He knew he loved her, and thought she might even love him. In any case, the fact remained that he was an American, now committed to getting Karst's manuscripts for publication; and she a Yugoslav, working for Decani and committed to stopping him. Even if she weren't, how could he get her out of the country, and would she go with him? And would they let her into the States?

Restlessly, he got up, went for a cigarette and stood at the window looking out at Dubrovnik's stone walls, ramparts and citadels. The rain had lifted and the sun poured down on the palm trees around the hotel making their wet fronds glisten as if sprinkled with gold. Below, the sound of the sea soothed him. It was like a tropical paradise, far from Karst and Decani and Jazak and Townsend.

Stone glanced at his watch, and decided he could shave and wash before he left for Eleanor Hvar's. In the bathroom, propped on the shelf over the washbasin was a neat square white envelope. He tore it open. Inside, in a curious rigid up-and-down cuneiform kind of handwriting was written in French:

> *Mister Stone: You had your appointment with Karst just the same. Now I have mine with you. I promised to kill you the next time we met, but I did not succeed. We shall meet soon and here I will not fail.*

It was unsigned. Jazak—the totem-pole—had followed him all the way to Dubrovnik, to that very room, easily and without wasting time. He was in Dubrovnik, waiting...

Outside, a violet dusk had settled on the city, darkening Dubrovnik's tawny escarpments with deep wine shadows, and staining the sea purple. Stone walked across the drawbridge

into the city. He found his way into a square with a tall ugly campanile, then on to a broad cobblestoned street of matched buildings which was the *Placa*. It was crowded with people taking their evening stroll.

When it seemed certain no-one had followed, he let himself be carried by the eddying crowd down the *Placa* until he was able to slip into a darkened sidestreet, so narrow that he could almost touch both sides. Overhead, buildings bulked so close together that only a sliver of darkening sky was visible.

A shattering crash sounded behind him and Stone spun into a doorway, Luger out, prepared to make a stand; but no-one was behind him. A stone block, a heavy piece of cornice, had fallen exactly where he had stood only seconds before. Had the stone's fall been accidental? Did the coping stone explain Jazak's note?

Stone had the feeling that against such madness he had no chance, that he was going to be killed, to die even before he could once make love to Eleanor Hvar. *Death hath a thousand doors to let out life . . .*

Stone took even more precautions as he approached Eleanor Hvar's. Her house was squeezed between adjacent buildings, but on her street the salt smell of the sea was stronger and the night breeze blew fresh. He went up to the top floor where, thumbtacked to a door, was a duplicate of her card. There was no answer to his knock, so he knocked again. The door gave and, alarmed, Luger in hand, Stone stepped softly into the apartment, cautiously closing the door behind him.

He moved warily through a narrow corridor into a large room flecked with the faint light of a sliver of waning moon: a book-lined studio—it was much like the one in her Belgrade house, and on the desk was a Mirko Sutnjak sculpture. A nude in white stone, it seemed in the uncertain moonlight to shudder and breathe like flesh. It was of a woman, head hung modestly and face turned shyly away. Her arms, like powerful wings outstretched, shielded and bared her simultaneously, marking the tormented curve of her back and waist, and the full insistent breasts. Her belly had been scooped out, leaving only a heartless hollow, not the totally empty space Sutnjak had cut through his bronzes, but something more anguished and pathetic, a tortured emptiness backed by straining muscles, aching rib cage and the body wall behind. That it was Eleanor, or her younger self, Stone knew immediately and with absolute certainty.

On the large studio bed, turned on her side and swathed in a blue robe, Eleanor slept. Her hair flowed around the pallor of her face like a dark fall.

Stone went through the rooms to make sure no-one had come in before him, then bolted the door.

When he returned, she stirred uneasily. He put the Luger on a table, sank into a chair and watched her slow, rhythmic breathing. In mid-breath, she opened her eyes wide and looked into his, with instant recognition, as if in sleep she had known he was there. Though more beautiful with her hair free, she was also more unfamiliar. She put out her hand and he went to her, but as their fingers touched, her fear burnt through them like a palpable disease. The trembling of her body in his arms at once snuffed out the passion their abstinence had aroused and his fear had heightened. An anguished tenderness sharper than pain shocked him, a desire only to protect her from suffering, from her past and her future, to shield her nakedness even as he was uncovering it. And he knew what he felt was another kind of love. But when she touched him, a separate lust nourished a voracity for her flesh which, when it was done, was still unfed, and her unstopped cry in turn was not a release but a torment.

On the moon-drenched bed they lay together, her face against his heart, his tangled in her hair.

Silently, Stone lay there, elated by her head in the crook of his arm, her hair spread on his shoulders, her flesh against his. The faint night wind blew across them, the surf sounded in the distance, and he felt peaceful and absurdly happy. In a little while her breathing and the rise and fall of her breasts told him she was asleep and that gratified him deeply. The happiness spread out inside him like sunshine warming his blood. Yet there seemed little enough reason.

He still had to find Karst's manuscripts and get them out. He had only a short while before almost been killed—the totem-pole was in Dubrovnik pursuing him. Probably Decani and Townsend were not far behind. Although at last he had made love to Eleanor, the ghost of Mirko Sutnjak stalked between them and the white stone sculpture was there on the desk as a reminder.

What was to become of them? As he turned to cover her with her blue robe, his flesh stirred and he touched her again, slowly waking her from sleep, himself moved by a new, fiercer urgency that she matched.

While they were eating dinner in the small old-fashioned

kitchen, the telephone rang. It was Decani, and the moment Stone heard the metallic voice crackling from the earphone, his elation vanished. He and Eleanor were no longer an oasis; they were an outpost surrounded. Her answers to Decani were almost curt, and when she hung up, her jaw was set. Stone asked nothing and waited until she had put the Turkish coffee and *slivovitz* on the table.

She stared into her coffee cup as if trying to read the thick black grounds, and said, "Decani asked about you, Warren, and I told him you were here."

"In Dubrovnik? I'm sure he already knew that."

"No, *here*." She tapped the table with her fingernail.

"You mean he wanted to visit you tonight?"

She nodded.

"It's like that, is it?"

"No. It *was* like that . . . I said he couldn't. You were here."

"And?"

"He said to send you away."

"Well," Stone said, getting up. "I was just going anyway."

"Oh, sit down," she said, with an impatient wave of her hand, "and don't be such a fool." She poured more coffee and *slivovitz*, then continued, "I don't expect you to understand what happened between Petar and me, Warren. I don't understand it all myself. But this I do know: Petar saved me from the Gestapo and he nursed me back to life."

"So you were grateful?" Stone said, the jealousy bile in his throat.

"Warren, Petar *risked his life for me*, not once but many times. And it wasn't the way it is in Hollywood movies . . ."

". . . all right," Stone interrupted, "I believe you."

"I was grateful and there was no other way to show my gratitude. Petar wanted to marry me. When I refused, he never married, he always hoped I would change my mind."

Stone tried to match her likeness of this tender and loving Decani and the man he knew, the staring-eyed, blue-lipped man crushing the chambermaid's foot. But the tenderness and violence were like separate images that he couldn't get to fuse.

She leaned across and kissed him. Sitting back, she said, "Our worlds are so very different, Warren. We have been too poor, too often tortured and put to the sword to have your Anglo-Saxon notions of chivalry."

"Decani had them?"

"He loved me," she said simply.

"But not enough to tell you that *Karst did not kill your husband.*"

"Then who did?"

"Karst doesn't know. Maybe this totem-pole man, Jazak."

"But why?"

"He doesn't know that either. He thinks Jazak is a Russian agent, and he knows Jazak hated Mirko. And Jazak was with them in the mountains. He could have done it."

"You believe that? You believe him?" Her face turned blindly towards him, eyes brimming with tears.

"I believe him. Karst is no liar. Did you know that he named his son after Mirko? A murderer would have to be pretty coldblooded to name his own son after someone he'd shot, especially when that man was his best friend."

"His son, his son. Mirko. Mirko Karst," she repeated. Desolately, she began to cry.

Stone took her in his arms, knowing he couldn't comfort her, that her losses were inconsolable, but he offered the best he had. "I love you, Lili," he said, using Mirko's name for her. "Don't cry. I love you."

She began to laugh and cry together, parodying his words, "*I love you Lili. Don't cry.* What's easier to cry about than *I love you*? What's more painful or promises more unhappiness? I love you too, Warren. Don't cry. I love you, too. I love you, too. I love you enough that after our trip I told Petar I wouldn't work for him to get that manuscript of Karst's. I did work for him to get Karst's book more for myself, for Mirko, because I hated Karst, rather than for Petar. Now you tell me it wasn't Konstanty who killed Mirko." She pressed herself against him and he held her head tightly against his chest.

"Come home with me," he said thickly.

"Come home to America with me," she mocked him again. "The home of the brave and the free. Do you think we just tell them we're in love and they let me out? They won't."

It was on the tip of his tongue to tell her about Karst's boat to Bari, but he bit it back. He was by no means certain that Karst's man, or the manuscripts, or the boat would show up. "We'll manage something, somehow," he promised lamely.

"I love you, Warren," she replied bitterly.

She kissed him so grievingly, so desperately, it was more as if she were kissing him goodbye than kissing him goodnight.

The streets were empty . . . the shadows hung on the buildings like animal carcasses and in the distance Stone heard the hooting of owls. As he hurried, his heels were stark on the cobblestones and he heard an echo plainly behind him. but could discern no-one following.

He made his way out of the city walls, slowing his pace and walking easily. Just beyond the walls, as he went past the huddle of squalid shacks where a few old mules were tethered, someone clapped a hand over his mouth, pinioned his arms and lifted him bodily off the ground. So swiftly and expertly was it done that he couldn't move.

He was drawn into the shadows, and a drum-roll bass voice cautioned in quiet German. "Don't be afraid."

A resonance in Stone's skull vibrated with Antun Vuk's dying words, "Be not afraid . . ." Furiously, Stone tried to tear himself loose. The bass voice said calmly, "Mirko Sutnjak is my brother." It was Karst's man using Karst's password.

"*Mirko Sutnjak is my brother,*" he repeated.

In the shadows before him Stone saw a man easily seven feet tall and wide as a door. "*You are Mirko Sutnjak's brother?*" Stone reiterated, impressed by the sheer size of the man. The great head nodded.

"I am Branko Georgevic," the cavernous voice whispered. A hand twice the size of his own enveloped Stone's fingers in a crushing handshake. "I am glad you have arrived. I read in the newspaper they took Konstanty to a mental hospital."

"Yes. They want him to give them . . . what you lead me to."

"Do they think you have the material?"

Stone shook his head. "They think I will lead them to it."

Georgevic tugged a black, thick, drooping moustache, then pulled down the grey cap he was wearing. "You have not been easy to approach," he said. "Many are following you. There is not much time."

"I didn't think you would come so quickly," Stone said.

"Tonight Decani and his scum arrived from Belgrade. He is talking to the militia, the sailors in the port. They sit up there," he pointed to the mountain looming behind the city, where lights like yellow eyes seemed to look down. "They too will not expect us to move so quickly, therefore it is better we should."

"When?"

"Tomorrow night. The more swiftly we move, the greater

safety and chance for success. Tomorrow there will be no moon."

"Tomorrow night, then," Stone agreed.

"Good. As soon as it is dark, take the road up towards the mountains. I shall meet you along the road."

"All right."

"You will *not* come back to the hotel. But you must look as if you intended to return. Leave everything behind. There must be no suspicion that you are going anywhere except for an evening walk."

"And if I am followed?"

"Do not waste much time with evasion. I will look after those who follow you."

"Anything else?"

"No. Tomorrow is your day to enjoy the beauty of Dubrovnik. Goodnight, Mr. Stone . . . Ah, a moment. You may need this," Georgevic added, putting Stone's Luger into his hand. "I had to take it to assure myself you would not be rash." Then he was gone. Stone had not even felt him take the Luger.

Though he had been a long time falling asleep, Stone awoke early. Outside the day was clean and sunny, and in the brilliant light everything in the city, buildings, walls, towers, all seemed whitewashed. Beyond it, Mount Srdj towered bleakly: on its crest a squat threatening fortress-like building—the yellow eyes of the night before.

After breakfast, Stone walked through the market place. Wooden tables were piled high with peppers, apples, carrots and other fruits and vegetables, and against the side of the church, cabbages mounted a third of the way up the church wall like a mound of light-green skulls. A peasant with an old-fashioned scale and metal weights was selling them to people whose faces had the look of ancient, roughhewn wood carvings. But none of the market's colour and movement dissipated his melancholy . . .

If he left that night without telling Eleanor anything, it was straightforward, if not simple. But if he asked her to come with him, it was no longer either. Even if he didn't tell her, he could not be sure she would go that evening when the time came so suddenly on her. And would Georgevic take both of them?

At the end of the *Placa* he came to a magnificent multi-faced stone fountain, crowned by a biretta-like oval of red

brick. Though the fountain's sculptured faces were now eroded and distorted by loss of features, they still spewed water musically into a trough.

He made his way up steep stone steps, leading to the city walls. A little dizzied by the height, he looked out over the unguarded edge. Red, orange and brown tile roofs were splashed among the white walls and festooned with drying laundry. Flowers and vines garlanded balconies. A Franciscan monk, his tonsure a small white sun, was watering lemon and orange trees in the monastery's courtyard.

Beyond the city walls a green tide of trees swept up the hillsides, dark cypress, lush umbrella pines cutting the clear intense light with their restful shadows. Palm trees and spiky wild cactus were everywhere, a semitropical contrast to the dour medieval ramparts. In the harbour a boat jammed to the gunwales with passengers chugged out towards the islands.

It was not an idyllic scene, but the way life seemed to be for many men, without hatred, violence or murder. But not for me, he thought, not for us. If I take her with me and we are caught, she is doomed. But isn't she doomed anyway if I leave her here?

Stone continued his long climb to the top of the wall and then walked to the corner tower. The floodlights that illuminated the battlements at night reflected the sunshine; one of them, broken, was surrounded by shards of glass.

At that level the city below seemed almost remote. Beyond the sea lay in blue, green and black stripes, and Stone heard the faraway sound of breakers. Less than a hundred miles away lay Italy . . . and safety.

What startled him, Stone didn't know, but when he spun round a powerfully built young man in ill-fitting brown tweeds was pointing a camera in his direction. Good argument for Decani's reflecting trick glasses, Stone thought, slipping out of the man's way to let him photograph the panorama. The man dropped the camera from his eye and Stone saw a heavy-jawed face of Asiatic cast with dark, almost Mongolian, features.

He spoke and Stone replied in English, then French and German, but they could find no common language. Finally, the brown tweeds produced a pad and a pencil and combining drawing and pantomime, indicated that he wanted his picture taken against the background of the tower. He showed Stone how to focus and trigger the camera, and then posed, dark, unsmiling, sinister.

Stone grinned and said, "Say cheese." The man showed his teeth, Stone snapped the shutter and handed the camera back.

Another pantomime, this time more intense and urgent: he must now return the compliment and take a picture of Stone. Stone shook his head, refusing again and again, until, to get rid of the man, he gave in to his insistence and agreed. He stood tensely, as the man brought the camera up to his eye. The man's finger went to another button on top of the camera, and Stone dived to the floor.

The shot sounded flat, like a slapped face, and he heard the bullet tear into the path behind him. Before he could get to his feet, the tweed suit had hit him on the head with the camera and knocked him off balance. The man aimed a kick at his head and Stone twisted his attacker's ankle sharply and brought him to the ground. Then he had his Luger out. "All right, get up," Stone ordered. The tweed suit stood up. "Hands on your head," Stone said, gesturing with the Luger. Reluctantly, the man complied.

Who was trying to murder him now?

"Decani?" Stone asked. The man's face was noncommittal. "Jazak?" The man laughed in his face and Stone fought down the urge to pistol-whip the information out of him.

Holding the gun level with the man's belly, Stone walked closer to him, hoping to get his wallet. Abruptly, the tweed suit brought his forearm swinging down and caught Stone a stunning blow on the wrist, knocking the Luger from his hand. Then he butted him to the ground and they grappled, rolling over and over until the tweed suit was on top, a glass shard from the broken floodlight in his hand, trying to cut Stone's throat. Stone fought to hold the man's arm back but slowly the glass lowered. Mustering all his strength, Stone bridged, rearing desperately, and threw the tweed suit over, reversing their positions and now forcing the glass shard in the man's hand towards his own windpipe. The tweed suit's bared teeth and growling were like an animal's, and so was his own soughing breath and beating blood. The man went limp, and as Stone jerked back to keep from cutting his throat, spat in his face.

Instinctively, Stone dropped the piece of glass and wiped his eyes with his sleeve, but by then the tweed suit was up and running fleetly along the wall.

Stone picked up his Luger, sighted it on the man's back

right under the heart, and steadied his elbow. At that distance he could surely kill the man, but he couldn't make himself squeeze the trigger. The tweed suit turned to see if he was being pursued, tripped, lost his footing, and with a bizarre arm-flailing pirouette, fell over the parapet. His shrill, retreating howl followed him like a streamer.

Stone looked over the parapet. Down below the tweed suit lay spread-eagled and still. Slowly, Stone went back and picked up the camera. He slammed it smartly on the ground so that the back popped open and whatever film was inside, if any, was exposed. He dropped it over the parapet and watched it plummet down and land near the body. Like a sleepwalker, he put the Luger back beneath his jacket and hurriedly picked his way along the wall towards the harbour exit, aware that Karst's manuscripts had taken another life.

Then, like a series of twisted spotlit ikons, the deaths lit up and blacked out in his brain—Antun Vuk, his head lolling; the loden coat, the *banderilla* in his neck; the man lying dead at the foot of the wall; Decani's henchmen—

"Death still hath a thousand doors to let out life. I shall find one," Stone assured himself...

Eleanor was waiting when he arrived. They had lunch in the study, on the large desk, at the feet of Sutnjak's sculpture. She apologised for crying. He soothed her, saying she was tired.

"No," she said shyly, "it's not fatigue. Only that you've peeled a layer off my feelings."

"And you several off mine," he replied.

"You know," she said, suddenly gay, "it's true."

"What is?"

"Man is made for happiness as a bird is made for flight."

He looked at her, puzzled.

"A Russian poet, Korolenko, I once translated," she explained. Then, together, they began to laugh...

Stone told her of Karst's manuscripts, and asked her to come with him. Except for mentioning Georgevic's name, he was now committed on all counts, and in her hands...to betray him took only a phone call to Decani.

"Tonight?" she asked finally.

"Tonight," he said, "in a few hours."

She was silent, her face telling him nothing of what she was thinking, of what she would do.

Stone yearned for her with a terrible longing that was for the first time able to encompass their pasts however uncertain

he was of their future. They made love with a kind of fumbling rage at their bodies for not melting, at their flesh for not obeying the outcry of their spirits to weld their separate worlds, with a ferocity that acknowledged a beginning and an ending and found both insupportable. And afterwards she did not have to tell him she would go: he knew.

They had dinner at his hotel and were finished just as the sun began to edge the horizon. Stone went to his room. Carefully, he emptied the loden coat's briefcase and transferred the guns, ammunition and grenades to his coat and jacket pockets.

With the coat over his arm nothing bulged conspicuously, and he went down to the lobby where Eleanor was waiting. She took his arm gaily and as they left whispered, "We are under surveillance."

In the thickening dusk they walked up the road towards the mountains. On opposite sides of the road and some distance apart, two men dawdled along; in the distance behind them a grey Mercedes was parked at the edge of the road. It was growing chilly and Stone put his coat on, and helped Eleanor into hers. As he did so, he was amused to see that the men trailing them didn't know quite what to do; one stopped to pick blades of grass.

An old black prewar Mercedes-Benz shot past them, braked screechingly to a halt, then backed up to Stone. Georgevic was inside. "Look like you are giving me directions," he ordered, his eyes glued to the rear window mirror.

Eleanor began to gesticulate, making turning motions with her hand, while Georgevic spoke. "About a thousand metres ahead, the road bends sharply. As soon as you go round, those behind will not be able to see you for a while. Run ahead as far and as quickly as you can." He waved his hand, and the car roared off.

The road grew narrower, its sea side shearing off so sharply they had to cross to the mountain side to walk safely. The men following were now on that side too; their grey Mercedes inching along a good way behind. Abruptly, the road rounded a huge rock boulder, turning back on itself by close to ninety degrees, and the men trailing them were blocked from view. Hand in hand, Stone and Eleanor began to run.

Ahead, a heavy truck, its headlights dim, careened past, skidded, turned sideways and blocked the road at the narrow sharp bend so neatly that the only way past was either to

climb through, over or under it. The old black Mercedes-Benz was waiting just beyond. Georgevic had the car moving before they had slammed the doors.

He drove very fast . . .

Seven or eight miles on. Georgevic pulled off on to a side road, then into a bumpy field, and finally into a small clearing in a thick grove of stalwart pines. They all got out, and Georgevic skilfully removed the car's licence plates and then laid pine branches around the car until it was well-camouflaged. Then he turned and said, "I did not know there would be two of you, Mr. Stone. You are either a very brave man, or very rash."

They stood there glaring at each other until Eleanor said something in Serbo-Croat. There were a few brief sentences exchanged, then Georgevic embraced her and kissed both her cheeks. To Stone, he said, "Very well, then, we must go quickly." He took a collapsible spade from the car and set off up the mountain.

They hurried after him and Stone asked, "What Serbo-Croat charm did you use on him?"

"I told him I was Lili Sutnjak," she said. "Georgevic knew Mirko. They were together with Konstanty in the mountains.

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Georgevic's cousin married Karst's sister. Her son, Antun Vuk, was the boy murdered in your hotel room in Belgrade."

The path wound irregularly along the contours of the hill. They came at last to a thick stand of oak trees where Georgevic waited. He took Eleanor's hand and plunged into the underbrush. Stone followed. In a few minutes they came to a small meadow where humps of grey, lichen-covered stone bulked out of the ground. When they were quite close, Georgevic's bass boomed, "Bogomil tombstones." On them were crude carvings, like the drawings of disturbed children, but with the stark simplicity and power of elemental things passionately felt.

Georgevic stopped before a more recent gravestone with carved Latin letters: *Mirko Sutnjak.*

Eleanor began to tremble and Stone put his arm round her shoulders.

"I never knew where Mirko was buried," Eleanor murmured, "I thought they left him in the mountains."

"They did," Georgevic said softly, to her directly. "After the war, Konstanty and I went together and brought him back here so that he could look down on his beloved Dalmatia and the sea."

When Eleanor turned away, Georgevic began to dig at the foot of Sutnjak's grave. He was three feet down before Stone heard the sound of metal strike metal. Quickly, Georgevic brought up a rusty, corroded box, broke the lock on it, and threw it open. Inside were four neat packages wrapped in Pliofilm: Karst's manuscripts.

Georgevic handed them to Stone, dropped the licence plates he had taken from the car into the box, then carefully replaced the box, filled in the hole and covered the fresh earth with leaves.

They followed Georgevic up along a sheep trail through cypress and pine until they came to a shepherd's hut under a canopy of old oaks. Inside, Georgevic lit a candle and motioned them to a crude wooden table and the equally crude wooden chairs around it. Eleanor seemed stunned. She put her arms on the table, then her head on them, and closed her eyes. Stone set Karst's manuscripts on the table next to her dark head, and Georgevic, with a pitying look at her, nodded towards the door. "Better to leave her for a time," he advised.

Outside they sat on the cold ground, the irregular jutting of the cabin wall sharp in Stone's back. "We must wait for

nightfall," Georgevic said. "Darkness is our ally. There is another who follows you besides Decani."

The thin totem-pole figure of Jazak loomed in his mind and Stone described him to Georgevic. When he was finished, Georgevic spat.

"You knew him?" Stone asked, astonished.

"I knew him," Georgevic answered flatly. "He's from Sarajevo, just over the mountains." His head indicated the direction behind them. "When I saw that scar Konstanty had carved on his forehead, I thought it was a proper mark of Cain. His family was Bogomil, and their mark was on him too. But the Moslem was in him, an Oriental fever you could see in the way he loved to kill and in the way he treated women . . ."

Georgevic took out an old gold pocket watch. "I will need two, perhaps two and a half hours, to bring the boat back. It will depend on whether they have alerted their sea patrols or not." He pointed down the hillside to where the earth plunged into the sea. In the dying light a small cove and narrow beach were visible. Georgevic indicated a footpath that led down from the back of the hut, in the opposite direction from which they'd come. "That path will

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take you straight to the beach. Twenty minutes or a half hour to the bay from here. There is only one place to be careful, where you cross the road."

Stone looked at his wristwatch. "Two hours then?"

As Georgevic was about to leave, he hesitated, and looked at the hut. "She will come?" he asked.

"I don't know."

"You must be firm," Georgevic said. They shook hands and in seconds he was lost from sight among the trees.

When Stone came back inside the hut, Eleanor's face was in her hands and he pried her clutching fingers loose and kissed them, but she did not acknowledge his presence.

"Read me some of what Karst wrote," he said, trying to distract her from her melancholy. He unwrapped each manuscript and placed it in front of her.

Unseeing, she stared at the four neat piles of paper, then picked one up. "This is called *Earthbound*," she said in a flat, expressionless voice, as if reciting by rote. "It is dedicated, *To my wife, Alexandra, who was always sceptical.*" She leafed through the pages for a time, then remarked, "A novel about our collectivisation in the Voivodina." The second was a book of poems, entitled, *My Brother's Keeper*, its dedication, *For Mirko Sutnjak, brother, comrade and keeper, who lived and died a hero.* The third was called *The Unwithering State*, a polemic dedicated to Dr. Nikola Grout, Maxim's father.

The last was Karst's autobiography, *The Black Mountain*, with the epigraph, *For Mirko Sutnjak's widow and unborn son, casualties of the war; for my wife and living son, casualties of the revolution.*

She went on reading, apparently unmoved by the dedications, translating some of the autobiography. Then, a haunting lyric which began, "Speak to me, Mirko, my brother's keeper," an impassioned personal plea to a dead friend for guidance, and last, part of *The Unwithering State*, a fiery critique of the Communism Karst had known and helped to impose.

"Human freedom is at stake," Karst had written, "and therefore human personality and human life. We who have loved the people, must learn to love men; we who have enshrined the masses, in order to cater to their baseness or exploit it, must now enshrine the individual to develop and fructify him. A free man, self-made and self-making, a man who is part of and partakes in human society must be made

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to flower, a man in whom socialist humanism and amiability increasingly grow as animal competitiveness and ruthlessness become extinct. And it must be accomplished *in freedom*, for no system can be imposed on a people against the grain of its character and its history . . ."

". . . and in the long run we're all dead," a voice interrupted.

It was Townsend, standing in the doorway, a small sub-machine-gun cradled in his arms. Behind him was the grimmer, broader bulk of Grout, silent, a black Colt .45 in his fist, and over his shoulder a worn leather knapsack.

Deliberately Stone reached into his pocket for a cigarette and heard the safety on Townsend's sub-machine-gun click off. He brought out cigarettes and lighted one for himself, another for Eleanor, surprised to see his hands steady, the flame unwavering. Slowly, he laid the pack on the table.

"I'm sorry, Stone," Townsend said, "that this has to be the way. You've stumbled into an undeclared war and in it sometimes civilians get roughed up. We must have Karst's books."

"You're going to have to kill me to take those manuscripts," Stone said, very quietly. "They were entrusted to me in confidence, and they are my responsibility."

"If I have to kill you, I will." Townsend said grimly.

"Don't be a fool, Warren," Grout advised quietly. "This isn't the time for grandstand plays. And weren't you the one who poked fun at words like duty?"

"Besides," Townsend added, "why kill yourself for that kind of high-flown rhetoric?" He nodded at the manuscripts.

"Is that your opinion too, Maxim?" Stone asked.

"No. Not exactly. Karst is an optimist, he always was. But what Karst writes is true and inevitable, though many—" with a sidelong glance at Townsend—"will think what he says is Bolshevik."

Townsend grinned crookedly. "The manuscripts, Max."

Like a croupier raking in the chips, Grout pulled three of the manuscripts to his side of the table, careful not to block Townsend's line of fire. Still holding the .45 in one hand, he nimbly rewrapped them and dropped them into his leather sack. Then he took the last manuscript gently out of Eleanor's hands. "That one, Max," she said, "is dedicated to your father."

Grout hesitated. His normally florid face seemed as white as his cropped hair. All that could be heard in the hut was the crackling of brown paper, then the squeal of Pliofilm

until a heavily-accented voice said in English, "*I will have that bag now.*"

It was the totem-pole . . . Saturnine. in black coat and Homburg, he looked like a diplomat except that in his hand he had a machine pistol. Townsend whirled round and Grout, depositing the last manuscript in his leather bag, made a slow about-face from the table. "I've been expecting you," Stone said.

"And I have been looking for you," Jazak replied suavely, "as my note informed you. Put your Luger on the ground, Mister Stone." To Townsend, he said, "You will place yours beside it." And to Grout, "The bag and pistol next to it." Grout stepped forward and dropped the gun and bag together.

Seeing Townsend tense, Stone, to distract Jazak, made a large hopeless gesture of throwing his gun next to the leather bag and said loudly, "I didn't know you could speak English." It didn't work.

Before Townsend could bring the sub-machine-gun to bear and press the trigger, Jazak shot him in the head.

The next instant Stone and Grout tried to rush Jazak, but the totem-pole backed off, kept the machine pistol trained on Eleanor, and said, "I can probably kill all three of you with one burst, but *I shall surely kill her.*" They halted, Townsend's body between them and Jazak. With his shoe, Jazak shuffled the sub-machine-gun to the door, then Grout's .45 and Stone's Luger, and last the sack of manuscripts, but he did not take his eyes or the pistol off them.

Inwardly Stone cursed himself for not having been prepared; if all three of them had tried together, one of them was bound to have killed Jazak. But now, they were helpless.

"Gentlemen," Jazak said politely, "you will please lie on the floor." Slowly, they kneeled and then stretched out. This is a nightmare, Stone thought, his face only a few feet from Townsend's shattered head.

"Now, madam, your turn." Jazak took a coil of rope from his pocket and tossed it across the table. "Tie them up, and tightly, please." Still holding the machine pistol at their chests, Jazak demonstrated. He wanted them trussed: their hands and legs behind them, ankles and wrists tied together.

Why bother to rope corpses, Stone wondered. Why didn't he simply shoot them and take off? Jazak was talking compulsively, as if he couldn't stop tasting the savour of his own words, and Grout's short grunted sentences egged him on.

Mechanically, Eleanor was tying up Grout. When she had finished she began on Stone.

"Karst was brave, intelligent and well-educated," Jazak was saying. "He was being groomed for the Number Two man, to lead the country into the Soviet camp. But he had to be watched . . . he was sometimes influenced by bad friends," Jazak relentlessly completed his sentence. "But soon he no longer mattered. He had no party, no followers, no power."

"But Karst did matter," Grout was saying, "Konstantin Karst mattered. No-one else could tell what he had to tell. *You knew he would tell it, and to the world.*"

"Yes," Jazak said quietly, "and that's why I am here. For those." He nudged the bag of manuscripts with his shoe. "I would have preferred to kill Karst—for this," he touched his fingers again to the scar Karst's weapon had made on his forehead, "but the Centre would not permit it. And perhaps it is better, for one so proud of his reason, to remain in a mental hospital. He will suffer far more. The Centre wanted only to see the manuscripts were not printed, and I have them now.

"Hurry!" Jazak barked impatiently at Eleanor. "Decani has patrols everywhere, looking for you. We do not have the whole night." Then he turned to Grout and calmly continued, "Mirko Sutnjak was a born deviationist. A bad influence on Karst as you and your father had been. Sutnjak talked such nonsense as socialist humanism and artistic freedom."

"So you killed him?"

Jazak made a formal bow. "Orders came to liquidate him, and to make it seem that Karst had done it, and I carried them out."

Stone had been watching Eleanor's face, but her expression did not change.

"*You* were the instrument of the Party," Stone said sardonically.

"I am the instrument of the Party, its unrelenting Bogomil hand," Jazak replied seriously. "I learned to kill as one learns a science. Killing is necessary. With some people there is no other way."

"And you couldn't forgive Mirko Sutnjak because he knew that was not the way life should be lived," Stone said. "You're a weapon, not a person."

"Sutnjak," Jazak replied contemptuously. "He wanted to drink, paint, and make love to women. Is that a man?"

"Is what you are a man?" Stone asked, horrified.

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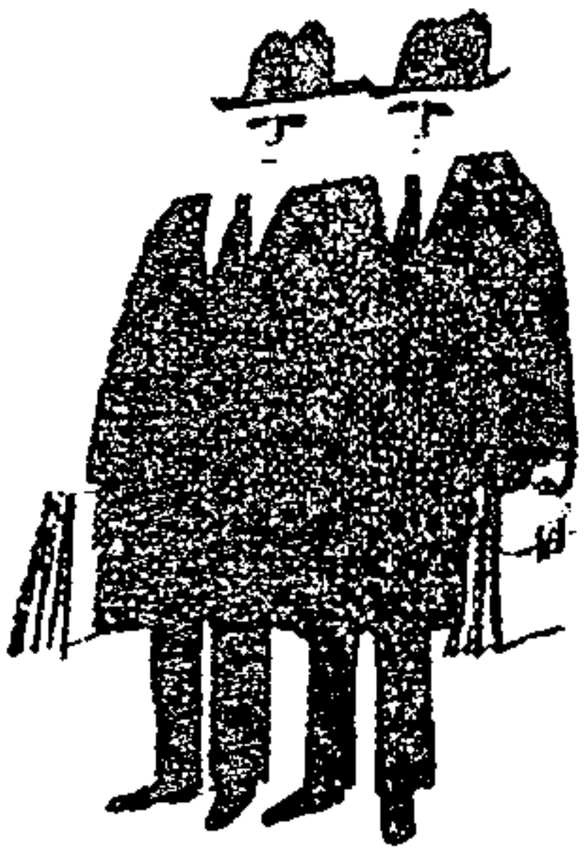

Eleanor had finished knotting the cords around his wrists, and stood up. Jazak motioned to her, and she walked around the table towards him, hands in her coat pockets, her face still starched and ironed. With his free hand, Jazak touched her breasts and said, "Is this what makes a man?" Awkwardly, he pulled her head to him by the hair, and with his leg held her against him, body to body, then glued his mouth over hers, until the blast of a gun, once, twice, slowly separated their bodies. Jazak clutched his side. Blood poured over his hands, and a wisp of black smoke floated up from Eleanor Hvar's coat pocket.

Jazak began to shriek, single words, exclamations, as if they were being torn out of his mouth like teeth. He staggered towards her, his bloody hands groping, and she took out the Walther automatic and with a steady hand shot him twice more, in the chest. He stared at her as if she had committed some completely gross and improbable impertinence, then his knees buckled and he fell at her feet. In the long silence that followed, Eleanor Hvar stood staring down at his body, dazed, the gun still aimed, until finally she fainted.

While they fumbled untying each other, Stone asked, "Why did he wait to kill us? It would have been so easy for him to give us a burst and run."

"He had to tell us. He wanted us to know who he was, what he had done."

"The last word?"

"The last word." Grout's head dipped. "You see, Warren, you made one mistake. Jazak was not a weapon. He was only a man."

As soon as they were untied, Stone reached for the leather bag, and announced, "Max, I'm taking those manuscripts."

Grout, still squatting on the floor, rubbing his wrists and ankles, looked up and said, "Sometimes you surprise me, Warren, you really do." He looked stunned and suddenly older, and there was a fatigue in him so profound and apparent that his bulk seemed to have shrunk and withered.

Together, they revived Eleanor, and poured some of the *rakija* into her. The first thing she sputtered was, "Is he dead?" They nodded in unison. "I killed him, didn't I?"

"If he owed anyone a death, he owed it to you," Stone said.

"There was no other way, Lili," Grout added.

"What makes a man like that?" Eleanor whispered.

And Grout's response was an epitaph for Jazak, "... the evil man is born with his wickedness as the snake is born with its poison fangs." Evil and wickedness: they were not words one heard much any more.

Eleanor sat in the chair, vacant-eyed, watching as Stone gathered up the bag of manuscripts, the gun, Townsend's machine pistol, and her little Walther automatic, while Grout searched Jazak's body. Jazak carried no papers other than three passports in three different names, Yugoslav, Bulgarian and Rumanian, and large quantities of cash in all three currencies. Grout separated each of the cigarettes Jazak had, sliced open the heels of his shoes and the lining of his clothes, with Jazak's own knife, but found nothing. "A real pro," Grout said, admiring and grudging. "They train theirs well."

Stone looked at his wristwatch. There wasn't much time left; he should be starting for the beach: Georgevic would soon be there. Grout caught him looking at the watch. "Georgevic taking you over to Bari tonight?" he inquired.

"You never quit," Stone replied angrily, "do you? Even when Jazak was going to kill us, you kept right on at it, finding out what you could."

Grout looked shamefaced. "I'm made that way."

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Stone was forced to grin. "All right, then, I guess we have to take him along with us, Eleanor, don't we, so he can't explain it all to Decani?"

Eleanor's expression changed. Life and sadness seemed to flow back like blood into her face and her features became mobile. "I am not going, Warren," she said slowly.

Though he had never entirely believed she would go, never hoped that anything so good could happen to him, her refusal came like a blow that sent him reeling from its impact.

"But why, why?"

"How can I explain to you why?" She got up, and put her arms around his neck. "Warren, I love you," she said. "It does not seem like it now, but that's not the whole story. They are part of the story too." She shuddered at the two corpses. "And Mirko's grave out there."

"Come with me... please come with me."

"I can't. *All my dead are here, buried here!*" She shrugged helplessly. "My father and mother, Mirko... oh, how can you understand that?" she cried.

Even as he protested, "But that's the best reason you could have to leave, to go somewhere else where you can make a new life, create a new life," Stone understood.

"You Americans," Eleanor said, "you believe in happy endings."

"No, Eleanor, only in new beginnings," Stone replied.

No-one spoke for a while. Grout, kneeling over Jazak's corpse, was staring out into the night trying to look as if he had heard nothing.

"You're sure?" Stone asked her once, a last time, straight and not pleading.

"For now, I am sure." Tears welled up in her eyes.

"All right then," he said, after a pause, "there are things to be done."

Grout stood up. Stone handed him his .45. "Maxim, you might need this yet."

"Thank you, Warren, I shall remember that."

"We can't leave the bodies here to involve... our friend. I imagine you'll want to take Townsend's body back. Have you a car?"

"Not too far from here."

"Good. Can you let Eleanor off somewhere safe, so she can get back to Dubrovnik? The quicker the better. As long as she is staying in this country, she shouldn't be caught with you."

"I can get back alone very easily," Eleanor Hvar said. "Remember, I was a Partisan for almost four years."

"What will you tell Decani?" Stone asked.

"I'll tell him you took me for a walk in the woods, but that I wouldn't and you lost me." Irony glinted in her grimace.

"And you, Maxim?"

"Unless they catch me with Townsend's body, nothing. Otherwise, Townsend was hurt in a shooting accident."

They cut two saplings, and with rope made a rough stretcher. They laid Jazak's coat on it, and then the bodies. Stone threw sand on some blood on the floor. "I guess that's it," he said.

Grout picked up the jug of *rakija* and said, "We should have glasses to make a farewell toast, and then smash them against the wall in good local style." He raised the jug, smiled at them, and said, "To a safe journey—*for all of us,*" and tilted the jug back. Eleanor gazed at their faces as if to reassure herself of their presence and to remind her of them in their absence, and said, "*To life.*" She drank shortly and when she passed the jug to Stone her lips were still wet as if she'd just been kissed.

"*To reunion,*" Stone said, then he drank, and when he was finished, he snuffed the candle out with the bottom of the jug.

They took the path that led sharply downhill from the back of the hut, Eleanor carrying the guns while Stone kept the bag of Karst's manuscripts slung over his shoulder yet managed, with Grout, to carry the two bodies on the improvised stretcher to where Grout's car was concealed in a clump of trees. Grout lifted Townsend's body soberly into it, and covered it with a car rug.

Then they hauled the stretcher with Jazak's body swiftly across the road to another stand of trees and put it down.

"Can you manage it from here down to the water, by yourself?" Grout asked.

"I'll manage. It's not too far now."

Grout measured him appreciatively. "You'll do," he said. "That war record was no exaggeration. You're a lot more than just a literary agent." He meant it for a compliment.

Stone shook his hand.

"Goodbye, Maxim."

"Oh, not goodbye, Warren. I think we'll be seeing something of each other yet," he said, and sounded glad of it. "Coming, Lili?" he asked, opening the car door for her.

"No, Max. You go south, back to Belgrade. I'll walk towards Dubrovnik. It is safer that way."

Grout nodded. He leaned over and kissed her cheeks. "Mirko would be proud of you," he said huskily. He drove the car quickly up on to the road and only when he was several hundred yards away from them did he turn on his lights.

She came into Stone's arms, quivering. "I killed him, Warren," she murmured, "I killed him."

"If you hadn't, he would have killed us all."

"Does that make it good?"

"No, better. The best we could do." His fingers dug into her shoulders and he buried his face in her hair. "Come with me," he said.

"I can't. I must stay here, at least for a while. Until all this . . . I need time."

"Time is what we have least of."

She tugged the strap of the leather bag. "Well, you got one thing you wanted, Warren. They are good books. They will make a sensation, and lots of money . . . Warren, Warren, *there's nothing you can do now—except wait.*"

Automobile headlights burst suddenly over a rise, came surging along the road towards them, and together they fell to the ground. The car swept up, lights flashing, and then past, and they lay together in the darkness, their breathing open-mouthed and quick. She reached for his hands and when she found them took them through her clothes into her breasts as if bringing him home. And when he was holding her, feeling her heartbeat against his palm, she burrowed beneath his shirt and discovered his flesh. Hands on his sides, each of her fingers in the hollow of a rib, she held him as if she would join herself to his very blood and breath. "I have learned from you, Warren," she whispered, her fingers tightening until he felt her nails, "I have learned so much from you."

He said, "And I from you." He kissed her mouth, then her breasts, as if in them, in her, he were plumbing depths of himself.

"It's late," she reminded him, and her breasts, like live things, withdrew from his hands as she freed herself from his embrace.

They got up together and he asked, "Can I write?"

"It is better not to," she answered.

Without words she turned and began to walk along the

road back to Dubrovnik. When she had gone only a little distance, his voice ripped "Eleanor" from his throat. She turned and stood still, then waved a halting, constrained motion that was acknowledgment and goodbye. Stone strained his eyes to tears to keep her in sight to the last possible moment, and then she was lost in the shadows . . .

Stone put the guns into the leather bag with Karst's manuscripts, thinking ironically of the phrase, "words are weapons," and kept the Luger in his belt in case. Then he crossed the road and cut Jazak's body free of the stretcher. He slung it, fireman's lift, over his shoulders.

He moved down the slope slowly, gropingly, feeling the burden of Jazak on his back, and not sure that he was headed for the narrow strip of beach where he was supposed to meet Georgevic. Try as he would to keep from thinking of her, he kept seeing Eleanor walking the road back to Dubrovnik.

As he came into a clearing of bald rock outcroppings, Stone saw in the distance the sliver of beach and the black bay water. They were not too far off and the sudden heady feeling that he might escape lifted his heart. He plunged down again through the trees, until finally he came out on the pebbly beach, and laid down Jazak's body behind a rock. He forced himself to look ahead and there he saw Georgevic's fishing sloop, anchored offshore. Georgevic, pulling strongly on the oars of a dinghy, was heading in towards the beach.

When the dinghy came close inshore, Georgevic shipped his oars and waited. Stone stripped down and made three slow wading trips out to the dinghy, where the water was just under his chin: the first with Karst's manuscripts and the guns held over his head, the second with his bundle of clothes, and the last with Jazak's body.

Georgevic silently helped him get the corpse into the dinghy, and then Stone swung himself over the side.

"She did not come," Georgevic said, "I feared it would be so."

He began to pull for the sloop.

Once the dinghy was alongside, Georgevic leapt aboard the sloop and deftly tied on. Stone began to hand up the leather bag, his clothing, and then Georgevic reached down to help him and lifted the body up.

Georgevic at the helm nosed the sloop out of the bay, and almost silently and without lights took it out to sea. Stone rubbed himself dry with an old yellow towel Georgevic had taciturnly handed him, and put on his clothes. Then he

stretched full-length on the boards and tried to let the slow rhythm of the engine soothe the tension out of him.

"Man is made for happiness as a bird is made for flight," Eleanor had said. Happiness, Stone thought bitterly, happiness. What a pernicious idea, what an alluring travesty of human life, the "happily ever after" of the fairy tales. Most happiness was small, intermittent, infrequent—perhaps even accidental and unlooked-for. And yet if that idea, that blind and plunging commitment to searching for happiness in life was pernicious, it was also grand, one of mankind's consummate creations. Living was bound up with that promised pulse of pleasure and spiral of joy. Stone closed his eyes...

The steady beat of the engine and Georgevic impassive at the wheel seemed not to have changed when he woke again, but the night was colder. Georgevic motioned to the base of the wheel where Stone found dark bread, sausage and a jug of *rakija* in a sack.

Suddenly Georgevic's body stiffened. "Did you hear anything?" he asked.

Stone shook his head. Georgevic cut the engine, put out the wheelhouse light, and let the sloop glide.

"Airplanes," he whispered. "Two. I did not think they would be so swift."

The airplane engines pounded over them in a climax of sound as if at any moment they would break through and rake them with machine-guns. Abruptly, one plane broke off and roared northward. Suddenly the roar of the other engine stopped. In the silence the sea noises and their breathing were loud.

"He's cut his engine to see if he can hear anything below," Stone whispered.

Both of them turned their faces up, tensely waiting. Time stopped. Then the airplane engine hiccuped into a full-throated roar, so close it seemed only yards away. The plane circled above; was climbing, heading back for Dubrovnik.

It was time, Stone knew, to be rid of Jazak's corpse. There were canvas and ropes aft, and some weights. Quickly, Stone rolled the body up in the canvas, weighted it, and together they threw Jazak's corpse over the side and watched it sink heavily from sight.

The horizon had become a jagged white scar between fraying darknesses of sea and sky when they came on the Italian fishing smack. Georgevic signalled them, they hove to, and

their captain came aboard. Georgevic bargained with him: for some of Stone's dollars and the promise of more, the Italian captain would take Stone not to Bari but to the small fishing port of Vieste; from there, he could get a bus for Foggia and then a plane to Roma.

Stone slung the leather bag with Karst's manuscripts over his shoulder, turned away to double-check that he still had the Luger and ammunition for it, and followed the Italian captain to the side. Stone turned and looked into Georgevic's face.

"There's no way to thank you," he said. "You know that."

"There is no need."

"Goodbye, Georgevic." They shook hands.

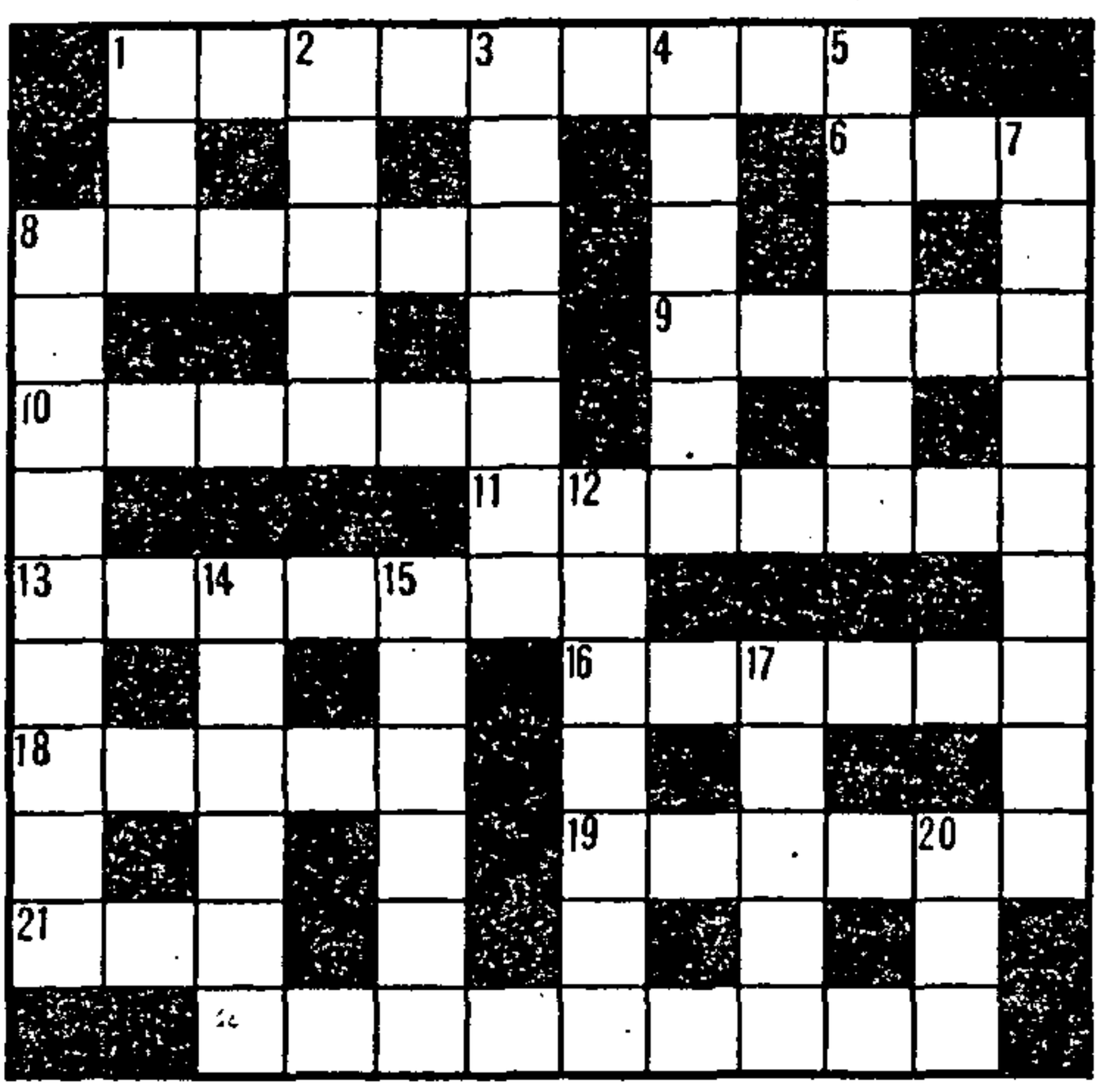
"Do not worry," Georgevic said gently. "She will be all right . . . and I, too."

But would they . . . and Karst, and the others? Stone wondered.

The Thousand Doors is to be published by Wm. Heinemann in September at 21s.

TEN MINUTE CROSSWORD

(Solution next month)



ACROSS

1 This shaft's so plain! (9).

6 Fabulous bird (3).

8 He disposes his forces (6).

9 Loop of a rope (5).

10 To intrigue (6).

11 Sounds as though this beast's a deceiver! (7).

13 Rice dish (7).

16 Atelier (6).

18 A stocking? (5).

19 Strait (anag.) (6).

21 Newt (3).

22 Pick a skinny person to frighten! (9).

DOWN

1 On an equal footing (3).

2 Rogue and card! (5).

3 One the police want to question? (7).

4 Land fit for tillage (6).

5 Terror (6).

7 Three-handed murderer? (3-6).

8 Confidence a policy gives? (9).

12 Human pledge (7).

14 Cracking acrobatic feat! (6).

15 Barren Arctic regions (6).

17 Absolute (5).

20 Greedy female! (3).

cool drinking

DON'T mix your drinks, is the sound advice any sensible father gives to his son—or, for that matter, his daughter as well. But mixing various constituents to make pleasant summer drinks is a different and desirable exercise—and most of the alcoholic content is pretty low anyway.

Eve's Tempter, thought up by the Relska Vodka people, is a case in point. Put a couple of ice cubes in a tumbler, pour on a measure of vodka and fill up with Shloer Apple Juice.

Another one out of the same stable is *Rosy Glow*. Again put the ice in a tumbler, pour on two parts of vodka to one of Campari, add a slice of lemon and fill up with soda water.

A not very expensive but wholly delightful midday drink for a hot day is *Bucks Fizz*. Half fill claret or champagne glasses with fresh orange juice. Top up with a non-vintage champagne or a white sparkling wine and it's just the job with a meal in the garden.

Hock Cup can be made by marinating some summer fruits in the iced wine for a few hours and then adding soda water just before serving. But summer is when the muscat wines really come into their own. The sweet, rich Frontignan comes from the south-east of France where the vineyards were planted at the time of the crusades. A good measure of this wine can be topped up with iced soda water.

A glass or two of Golden Guinea Sparkling Muscatel at cocktail time is most refreshing, or the same wine can be equally satisfying with summer fruits at the end of the meal.

As an aperitif, or as a dessert wine, one of the superb Alsatian muscat wines of 1961—or 1959 (if you can still find it) is always appreciated. I'd suggest the Réserve Exceptionelle Selection Jean Hugel, costing about 26s. a

bottle and worth every penny once you've tasted it...

It is the British habit to associate vermouth with gin as a short drink, but the Italians like it as a long summer thirst quencher. Try, for example, a Cinzano Bianco with tonic water or a Vermouth Cassis which contents many a Frenchman when the sun is high in the skies of Provence. Then you can pour a measure of dry French Vermouth over ice, add a dash of Crème de Cassis and fill up the glass with soda water. Or put a bottle of dry white wine on ice.

South Africa also has the medium dry white Stein, costing about 11s. a bottle, for drinking on sunny days.

Something quite new in Britain is the exciting wine aperitif, Ambassadeur—made by the famous liqueur firm of Cusenier. It has an undertone of orange and aromatic herbs, and can be drunk neat and iced, or topped up with iced tonic water, lemonade, soda water or champagne. The price of a large bottle is about 23s.

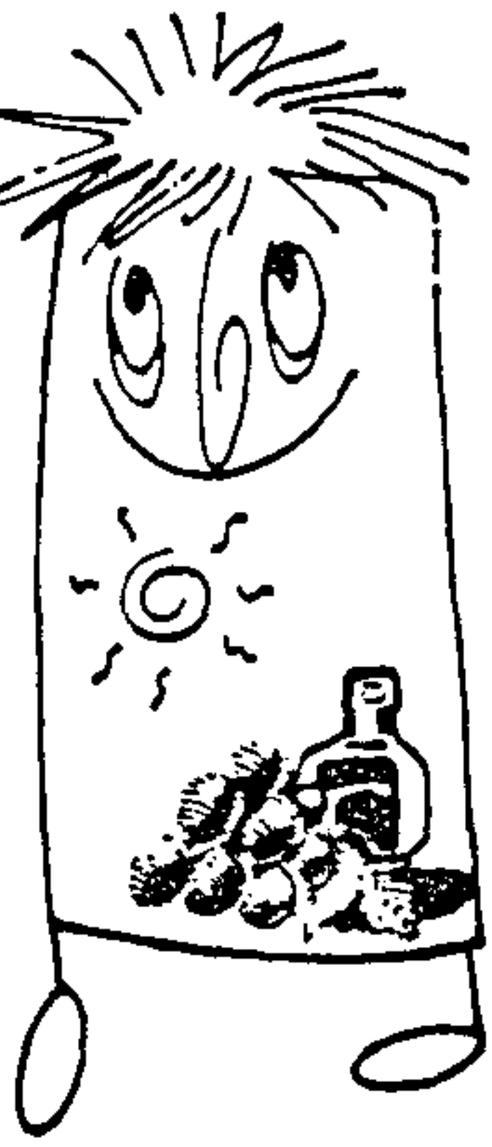
A quite unusual summer cooler, which seems to defy all the rules, is *Sherry Shiver*. This is best made in quantity for, say, a party. Pour a bottle of sherry, not too dry, over ice and let it stand in a cool place for half an hour. Before serving in tumblers top up with some iced ginger beer. It sounds an odd mixture, but so is *Hat Trick*. This is also a party drink. Take one bottle of red wine (a burgundy type); six tablespoons of a tawny port; four of Benedictine; two oranges and two lemons thinly sliced and some soft brown sugar. Put the fruit, wines and liqueur in a bowl with ice and let it stand for half an hour. Then stir and sugar to your fancy. Before serving, add a pint of cola.

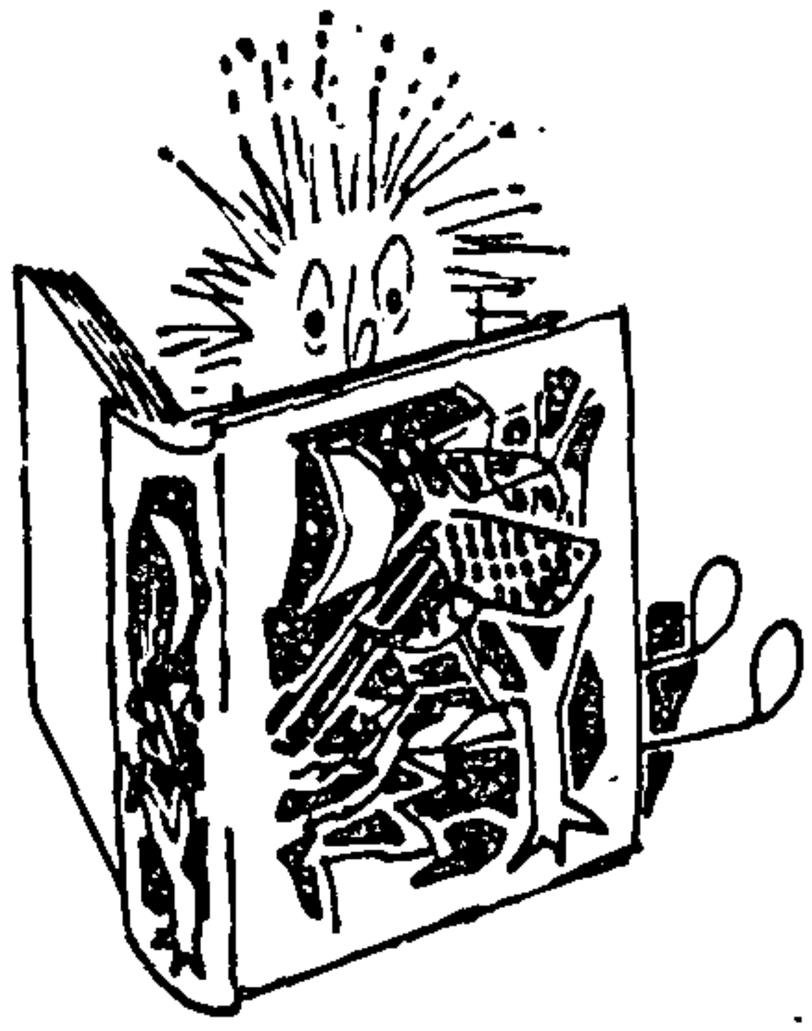
Cider, in any form, is one of the best drinks for summer.

Put a decent-sized lump of ice into a jug, and pour on a flagon of dry cider. Add a wine glass of dry gin, freshly-crushed mint, borage, cucumber peel and about one third of a siphon of soda.

Then I suggest you go out and play a game of cricket, join in a tennis match or just think of cool drinking.

J.B.W.





bookshelf

ON THE back of the dust jacket of *One More River* is the photograph of a suave, white-haired man. His suit is perfectly tailored. Everything about him is relaxed, serene. He is the author, Gordon Hunt.

How different Mr. Hunt would have looked if a photograph could have been taken on a day in May 1942.

The savagely victorious Japanese were overrunning Burma. Ten white men and a golden-haired dog were struggling down a mountain to the Mekong river. They were unshaven, exhausted. Their clothes were in shreds and they looked like starving scarecrows. One of them was Gordon Hunt.

This is their story he has written—a story of hair-raising escapes and danger, as this handful of men and a dog, ill-equipped and with little food, travelled for weeks through some of the most difficult country in the world. They were unlikely companions too, for only circumstances had thrown them together and they had just one thing in common—a grim determination not to be captured. (Collins, 25s.)

Until he wrote *Olura*, say his publishers, women had played very minor parts in Geoffrey Household's novels. This is a detail which had escaped me in the excitement of his high-powered plots.

Anyway, this is his first love story and Olura makes a striking heroine. She's beautiful, wealthy and has a talent for getting into danger.

The scene is Spain. Olura is about to be compromised with an African Prime Minister and a dead body—both in her bedroom. But Philip Ardower, a young philologist on holiday brushing up his Basque, is at hand. How he tries

to get rid of the body and rescue the impulsive Olura makes exciting and amusing reading. (Michael Joseph, 25s.)

The Man, an enormously long novel by Irving Wallace, has set all America talking. And it's not surprising for Douglas Dilman, "the man," is a negro who, through a series of accidents, becomes President of the United States.

Most of his cabinet take it for granted that Dilman will be content to be a figurehead. But they are wrong. He becomes beset by enemies and danger, not only because of his uncompromising honesty but also because of his colour. The most vicious betrayal comes from his beautiful secretary.

A dramatic and memorable novel. (Cassell, 30s.)

Understrike, by John Gardner, is the successor to his tongue-in-cheek best seller, The Liquidator, and is about the same British Security agent and reluctant killer, Boysie.

This one sends the unwilling Boysie on a top secret mission to America to be the British Special Security representative at the test firing of their latest missile. There's lots of interesting opposition but this book is strictly for those who enjoy their spy stories wrapped up in the P. G. Wodehouse manner. (Muller, 18s.)

John Keir Cross has edited another of his spine-chilling collections, *Best Horror Stories No.* 2.

The outstanding writers of the macabre and sinister are represented: M. R. James, Theodore Sturgeon, John Collier—names already known to Argosy readers. (Faber, 18s.)

Nicolas Freeling's novels are often compared to Simenon's which seems invidious as his writing has plenty of personality of its own. But they have one pleasant thing in common. Freeling's Dutch Inspector, Van Der Valk, like Simenon's Maigret, are both men doing a tough job with a heart as well as a brain.

Freeling's success hasn't come easily. At one time, in order to support his family, he worked as a chef during the day—and had to do his writing at night. Now of course, things are reversed, and Freeling's cooking is done for his own amusement.

Now Penguin have published his first three books in paperback—*Because of the Cats, Love in Amsterdam,* and *Gun Before Butter.*

If Freeling is a new name to you, then by all means buy one. You'll go back for the other two! (Penguin, 3s. 6d. each)

J.D.

man about cars

THERE'S sheer joy in the folding back of the hood of the Austin Healey 3000—especially when the summer sun is out. It isn't unusual for one to have to find out how these things work in the middle of a snow storm!

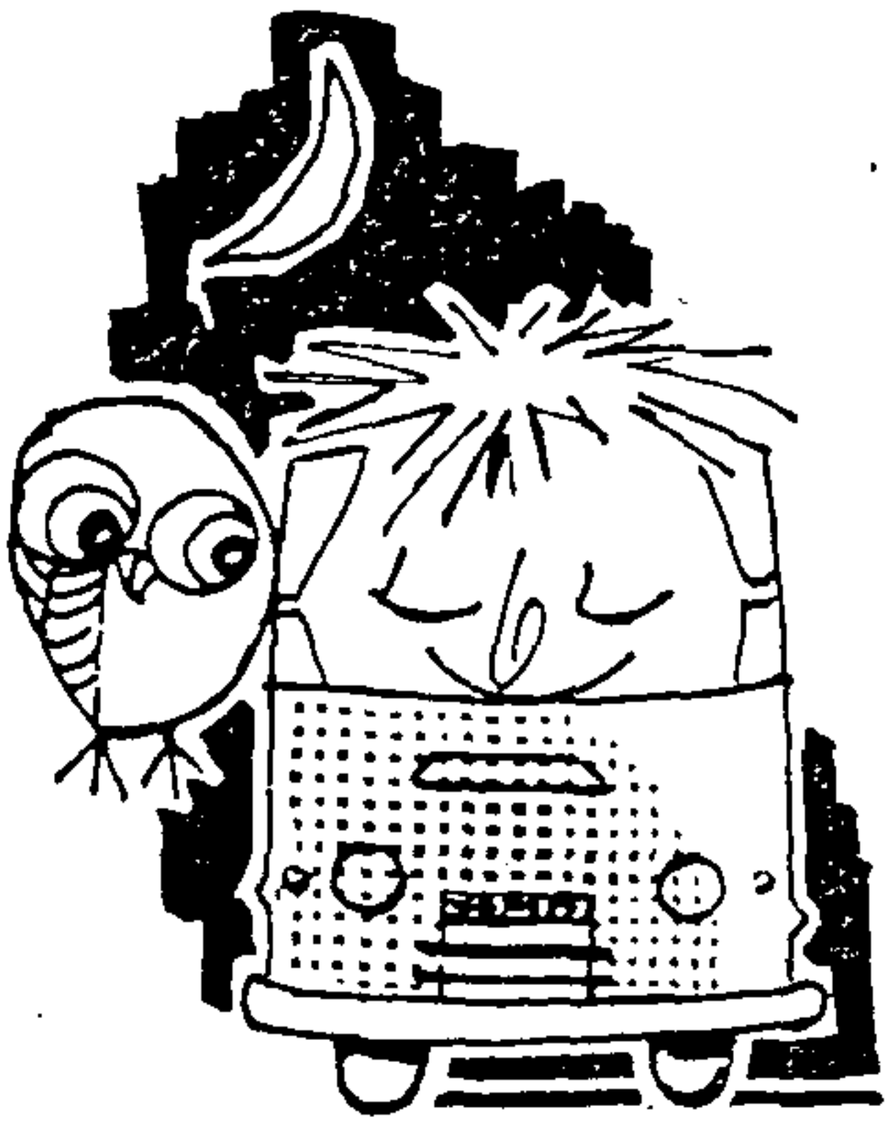
At any rate my pleasure was increased because the hood of the Austin Healey 3000 is particularly easy to fold up and one of the simplest to erect.

It has only two simple catches to operate. When in the correct position with both windows wound up, it can prove to be a little draughty—but not to a worrying degree.

By current standards, the Healey 3000 is rather old-fashioned.

It has been in production in one form or another for ten years. But old-fashioned or not, the Healey 3000 is a car on its own—with a performance which is more than enough for most people. This, coupled with its rugged construction, is probably why it shows up so consistently in international rallies.

The Austin Healey 3000 is really a two-seater, high performance convertible with room in the back for two children. This extra space is shaped and padded and will fold down to make a small luggage platform.



Seating for the driver and passenger is comfortable with good fore and aft adjustment but there is no adjustment for rake.

The steering column is adjustable—an optional extra—but in the test car it was so tightly done up that there was no-one strong enough to check the amount of adjustment that was provided.

As can be expected in a car of this class, the controls are well laid out and they are very easy to reach. Instrumentation is good with rev. counter plus

speedometer, oil pressure, water temperature and fuel gauge.

Unfortunately, there was no ammeter.

In the latest smartening-up process, BMC have added bright metal-rimmed walnut facia. This looks very nice but is not a very good safety idea.

Other parts of the cockpit including the door sills are padded.

Performance certainly knocks out any ideas that the Austin Healey is an old-fashioned car. The six-cylinder 2.9 litre engine provides 0-50 m.p.h. in just under seven seconds with a top speed of 125 m.p.h.

With this sort of power under the bonnet, good brakes are essential. The Healey 3000 has disc brakes at the front and drum at the back. This gives excellent stopping power and one couldn't ask for more.

Handling is good both in directional stability and the highly-important cornering.

High speed on motorways is quite effortless but your driving demands much more concentration on roads with a less even surface.

Despite its big rugged feel, the Austin Healey 3000 can be hurled round corners at high speeds steering with the throttle.

I wouldn't advise this when carting your maiden aunts around—but it's certainly exhilarating when you are on your own!

However, one can't have all these virtues without having some snags. And the Austin Healey 3000 has some snags.

The biggest of these is fuel consumption.

This is around 17-18 m.p.g. Using high octane fuel you tend to have to pay for your fun.

Another defect from my point of view was that the fuel gauge on the test car did very little to help, as the needle swings wildly between empty and full when one is accelerating or braking. I found this not only disconcerting but I found it needed careful checking on mileage to avoid getting stranded since the tank only holds twelve gallons.

However, these points, although to be taken seriously, are not too detrimental to the car—as a car. I repeat how marvellous it is tooting around with the hood back—and the fun one gets at high speeds.

It's not cheap—£1,107 including tax but you'll find you've got quite a lot of car for your money—and one that has a lasting quality, not a common factor these days.

K.F.

166

Man with a Camera

MORE and more people are making movies—often without ever handling even a still camera. But increased travel abroad, particularly the cruise holiday, has brought about the realisation that the modern 8 mm. movie camera is very simple to use.

Movie-making is not really expensive. It costs no more than black and white prints, or 35 mm. colour slides. A fifty-foot roll of 8 mm. colour film—and the majority of people use colour, costs under 28s. This gives you four minutes of viewing, and it is possible to obtain between twenty and thirty different shots. Each shot can be considered to be the equivalent of a single still picture—except it moves!

The inexpensive cameras have only one control to set—the lens aperture. Just set the pointer on the lens to the marks representing bright sun, cloud, et cetera, and correct exposure is assured.

Slightly more expensive cameras are operated by electricity powered by torch batteries, and have an automatic control for the aperture so that there is virtually nothing to do except aim at your subject and press the button.

Most manufacturers are producing cameras—even quite inexpensive ones—with zoom lens. These act like a small telescope and bring distant objects up close, so that the picture area is well filled.

To show your films, you will need a projector. Once you've made the basic investment in a camera and projector, you are all set for many years of filming, for movie equipment is well made and has practically unlimited life. But you'll also need the odd accessory. One is a splicer which is used for joining several rolls of film together into one continuous length so that you can give an uninterrupted show. It costs about £2-£3.

There are few rules in movie-making. Mostly it's a question of common sense. But, for instance, you must keep the camera steady. If your camera is bobbing about while you are filming, then the picture will jiggle just as much on the screen.

Another important thing to keep in mind is that movies are

intended to record movement. Most people will freeze when they see a camera, and so make sure before you press the button that your subject will move about and do something, rather than stand immobile, staring at the camera.

To hold the interest of your audience, combine long shots, close ups and unusual angles—but all the time remember to make sure that your subject fills the view-finder. You should try to make each shot or sequence fit neatly into the film and help progress the story, however simple, smoothly from beginning to end.

If you have an electrically powered camera, put in a fresh set of batteries before a big shooting session. Never economise by "using up" batteries that have been partly used. It is not worth the risk of a power failure miles from the nearest shop. And always have plenty of film.

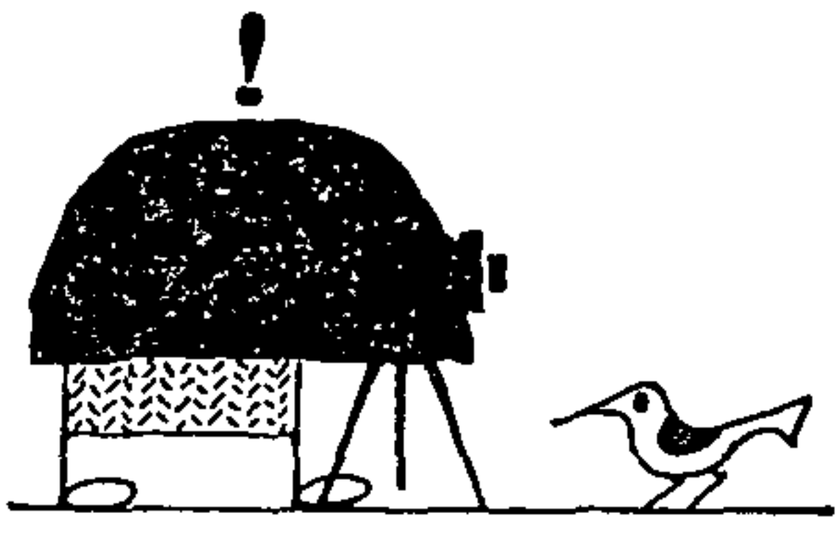
When travelling abroad, do try to photograph the names of towns and places on road signs or railway stations, so that itinerary-wise, your journey is self-explanatory.

I would advise not overdoing the filming from a fast-moving coach, car or train, however tempting it might be. The result on the screen is nearly always disappointing unless you are an expert, or have an expensive camera with different filming speeds.

Similarly, when moving the camera sideways to include more than the view-finder would show when stationary (this is known as panning) do move the camera *very, very* slowly and steadily—particularly if a tripod is not being used.

This is not easy, but it is extremely important for otherwise the projected subject will be blurred and jumpy. This is most irritating to a viewing audience, besides showing up a lack of knowledge on the part of the photographer.

Finally, always keep the camera protected.

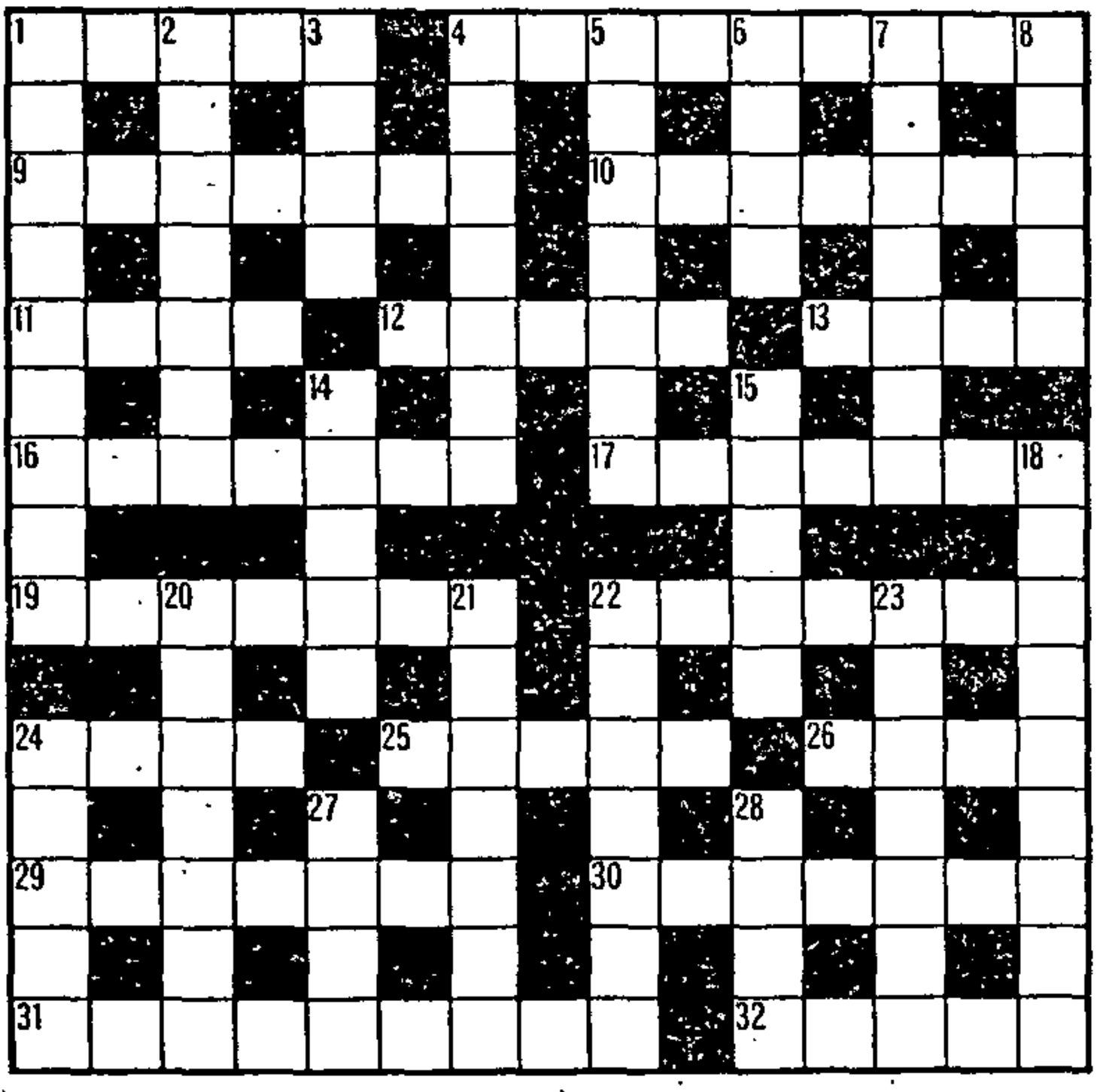


It must be covered or in its carrying case when not in use. It may not be possible to carry the case with you all the time for they can be bulky, but a plastic bag, or even better still a chamois leather bag, will do the trick.

Remember sand and dust can very easily damage your camera and would certainly scratch or mark the irreplaceable film record of that holiday. C.B.

ARGOSY CROSSWORD

Solution next month



ACROSS

1 RURal play-boy coined a word himself (5).
4 Military review—but not before April? (5, 4).
9 In the end were refreshed? (7).
10 To start with, Haggard's woman was in pot-house (7).
11 Flavour—of a gnat? (4).
12 Balance of fortune (5).
13 Remain on rope! (4).
16 Falls for American tourists (7).
17 Wild horse is bound to upset nag (7).
19 Prepare trainee for former big race? (7).
22 Move with the times? (7).
24 Shell causing shock! (4).
25 "Woodman, —— the beechen tree" (T. Campbell) (5).
26 As it was, as it were! (4).
29 Made straight for the comb? (3–4).
30 Woman of fashion (7).
31 Speed—of delivery (4–5).
32 Expansive member of the upper crust? (5).

DOWN

1 Land of Hope (9).
2 Good luck—with the mine! (7).
3 The proverbial talk of the place (4).
4 Cake and wine (7).
5 Platform where conductor stands (7).
6 Caddish inclination? (4).
7 Idiocy? Give it a name (7).
8 Nasty concoction is herbal (5).
14 "Light she was and like a ——" (P. Montrose) (5).
15 Treatment in practice (5).
18 Makes impression on affairs of state (5, 4).
20 Old Testament book—for tellers (7).
21 Squeeze out—of train? (7).
22 Prosper as author (7).
23 Dancer gave us quite a turn (7).
24 All that old jazz! (5).
27 Heart of matter, not of fruit (4).
28 Poems—of Hood especially? (4).

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MAKE THIS THE YEAR YOU LEARN TO WRITE

The broadcast by the BBC entitled "Can I Learn to be a Writer?" was based on interviews with the senior coach of the London School of Journalism and some of our successful students who spoke of the help they had received in attaining their success.

Their testimony was reinforced by the editress of a great national periodical who spoke of the need for competent instruction in the writing of features intended for publication.

Further tributes to the LSJ were broadcast last year on January 28th, March 1st and October 20th.

A warning was given about the doubtful value of the claims made by certain schools. If you seek our advice, you will not be lured by lavish promises or bombarded with letters urging enrolment upon you. If you decide to become a member, you will work under a personal coach and your work will be fully criticised and returned promptly . . . no waiting for weeks or even months.

LSJ Courses cover Articles, Stories, Staff Journalism, Radio Plays, T.V. Plays, Literature, History and Poetry.

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